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THE WORTHIES OF CUMBERLAND.

THE

WORTHIES

OF

CUMBERLAND.

JOHN CHRISTIAN CURWEN.

WILLIAM BLAMIRE.

BY

HENRY LONSDALE, M.D.

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF WATSON."

o. ε. μ.

LONDON:

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS,

THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE.

1867.

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PREFACE.

UNTIL the writer can furnish a more general introduction to the Worthies of Cumberland, he begs to intimate that in the issue of the present volume he has endeavoured to adapt its style and character to the tone or prevailing sentiment of North Country folk. Instead of an elaborate narrative, he has aimed at brevity, conciseness of arrangement, and the use of terse and simple language. Long quotations from Mr. Curwen's political speeches or agricultural reports would have greatly extended the size of the volume, and saved the biographer much labour and thought; but if he understands the homely spirit of his Cumbrian friends, he believes they will prefer the pith and marrow of Curwen's life to a more diffuse historical record.

Reviewers and critics, as well as friends, received the first edition of a biographical sketch of William Blamire with such kindness, that the writer deems it well to maintain the spirit of his former effort; whilst he hopes that a fresh arrangement of the matter, and

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some alterations and additions, will have rendered the memoir more worthy than its predecessor.

The writer disclaims all political bias—seeking only for an honest and faithful picture of both men and events; so that if the colouring of one of the political parties appears in strong glare, the fault rests not with the limner's pencil, but with the obtrusiveness of the yellow plush.

Should the public prove their regard for the memory of those who struggled so manfully on their behalf in times gone by, and left historical names of which Cumberland may well be proud, the series of volumes of which this is the first instalment will be continued.

ROSE HILL, CARLISLE,
May, 1867.

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JOHN CHRISTIAN CURWEN.

TO THE

REVEREND HENRY CURWEN,

Rector of Workington;

WHO AS A GENEROUS MAN, KIND PASTOR, AND ABLE MAGISTRATE, HAS CLAIMED THE HEARTY GOOD WISHES OF HIS PARISHIONERS FOR MANY LONG YEARS,

THE FOLLOWING MEMOIR OF HIS GRANDFATHER,

J. C. CURWEN,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY HIS OBLIGED AND FAITHFUL FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

THE

WORTHIES OF CUMBERLAND.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY:—*The Christians of the Isle of Man—their Cumberland Alliances. Ewanrigg. John Christian—his Birth, Education, and Manx Marriage. The Curwens of Workington Hall—their Lineage and Character. The Curwens and Christians united in John Christian Curwen.*

MONKS and monasteries have received but little historic quarter at the hands of modern writers or Protestant critics. The utilitarian of these latter days has been apt to consider the monks of old as an order of drones basking in the sunshine of glebes, drowsing in mortmains, or devouring a tithe inheritance, and their religious houses as little better than dirty nests to roost in; whilst the satirist, pointing to the close relations of the monastery and nunnery, has aimed his keenest shaft at the professed, but generally understood, imperfect celibacy of these cloistered fraternities. The monks, however, were the "Men of the Time," and contributed more largely than any other class to promote the civilization of the people. They were the divinity-men, the tillers of the soil, and the scholars of the age—and as such were hospitably welcomed by the people of England. They

wrote books, copied manuscripts, carved the images, and illuminated the pages of their written faith, as it was their calling to do; they were not less adepts at greater operations as the architects of the period, the reclaimers of land, the makers of roads and bridges; and by far the greatest benefactors of the landed interests in the country of their adoption. England owed its Christianity,* and its first steps in horticulture and agriculture, to the monks, who had the sagacity to select good lands for culture, and the banks of pleasant streams for their habitations; and, as Mr. Curwen used to remark, they were the most sensible men of the day who tried to profit by the mediæval example of the old friars. The cereals, fruit-trees, flowers, and vegetables, even the sheep and cattle of foreign lands,—most important acquisitions to the poor indigenous growths of England, were brought over by these proselytizing priests; so that, if they occasionally sought to be cozy with the daughters of Albion, it may be pleaded on their behalf that all men could not be like St. Anthony, much less could the women be like St. Clare (it would be a sorry look-out for humanity if they were); and that the *solus cum sola* principle was better than a Malthusian one at any period in history, but especially so in a thinly populated country like mediæval England.

From Mediævalism to the times of "Farmer George," at Windsor, involves a long stride in a nation's history, marked by stirring action and the sweeping changes

* Montalembert says truly in his "History of the Monks of the West,"—"No people on earth have received the Christian faith more directly from the Roman Church, and more exclusively through the agency of the monks, than the English."

of a higher civilization; but agriculture advanced so tardily, almost imperceptibly, that nearly all the scientific, and most of the practical, discoveries in the art belong to a period within the memory of some living men. It was not until towards the close of the 18th century that a feeling sprung up among the educated class of farmers that their art stood in need of improvement, and of those few—very few—who at the dawn of the present century stepped boldly forward to the front, and set an enlightened example to a great body of English and Scottish agriculturists, was John Christian Curwen, of Workington Hall, Cumberland.

Mr. Curwen has other claims equally deserving of note with his agricultural,—and superior claims could not well be advanced, to a favourable place among the Worthies of Cumberland. He was a politician, economist, and statesman; and did good "yeoman's service" as one of the tribunes of the people, when civil and religious freedom had but few defenders, and political independence and integrity still fewer exemplars in the Parliament of England.

In the preceding paragraphs the subject of this narrative is spoken of as Mr. Curwen—the name by which he was familiarly known to the two last generations, and will be remembered by posterity; but it may be well to premise that, previous to 1790, he bore the name of Christian only, and that in the person of John Christian Curwen two families —Christian and Curwen—were conjoined: indeed, for a great part of his life these two historical houses had no other representative. Baptized as John Christian, after his father, this name he retained for

34 years, from 1756 to 1790; on his second marriage, he assumed that of Curwen—his wife's name, so that he posssesed two surnames: the former, Christian, a name not essentially Manx, but of good repute in the Isle of Man for many centuries; the latter, Curwen, a name more largely historical, and gracing an ancient and noble English lineage. Thus favoured by birth, as well as by an inheritance of names, he may be said to have had historical honour at his back; and possibly the knowledge of this fact may have acted like a vital stimulus in prompting him to those noble public endeavours which, by dint of his success, eventually placed him on a line with the best representatives of both his ancestral houses. The Christians, or as they were originally called, MacChristens, should first claim attention.

The inhabitants of the Isle of Man, the historically Manx, are a Celtic race, speaking a dialect of the Erse —more akin to the Irish than the Scottish or Welsh Celts. The Christians may have sprung from the aboriginal Manx stock, or from the invading Scots, led by the famous Brule of the 3rd century; or the dynasty of Welsh and Norwegian princes; or Orree, the Danish sea-rover of daring deeds, whose memory is still cherished by the "old Manx salt"; or from Goddard Croven, who followed the Norwegians in the 13th century. At any rate there was variety of blood to choose from in Manxland, from the early Celt, or traditional Druid—colour and characters unknown, through the swarthy Scandinavian Vikings, down to the last element of the English Saxon, distinguished by fair complexion, and of which General Christian, of the 17th century, may be taken as the type. This

representative of the Christians, the "fair-haired William," figures in Manx legends, in English history, and in Scotch novels. As the Swiss peasant in his *châlet* recites to his children the prowess of William Tell, and the Scotch sing their ballads o'er Wallace the Patriot, so, it is said, the Manx maiden still chants, in the ancient Celtic tongue, a lament over the untimely fate of Iliam Dhone, or the "Fair-haired William."

The first well-ascertained name on the roll of history is William MacChristen, a member of the House of Keys, at the Tinwold Court, held in the Isle of Man before the feast of St. Bartholomew in 1422. Passing over two centuries, Ewan, who was made Deemster of the Isle of Man in 1605, at twenty-six years of age, and continued in office forty-eight years, claims a word here for being the first to omit the prefix "Mac" to his surname. Subsequently to his death, the family were known as Christian, and a numerous progeny they were, mingling with the best blood of Manxland, or seeking marriage relations in the West of Cumberland as the nearest mainland to Mona. This biography is only interested in the family of Ewan Christian, barrister-at-law, of Milntown, Isle of Man, Laird of the Manor of Ewanrigg, or Unerigg, Hall, in the parish of Dearham, Cumberland, at the early part of the last century.

Tradition says much of Ewanrigg Hall, "built castlewise," and standing conspicuously on the high ground bordering the southern shores of the Solway Frith, near Maryport. Like many of the old manor-houses in Cumberland, it has fallen from its "high estate" as the residence of the laird and the centre

of a good social circle; but as long as it remains an edifice or even ivied ruin, it can never be overlooked as the Hall of the Christians, and the birthplace of one of the family who added fame and lustre to the name of Curwen.

John, the son of Ewan Christian, had a son born to him at Ewanrigg, on the 5th October, 1719, named after himself, and who, on reaching manhood, and not wishing to go far in search of a wife—Ewanrigg and Workington Halls being not more than five or six miles distant from each other, married Jane, the eldest daughter of Eldred Curwen, Esquire, of Workington Hall. By this marriage the two houses of Curwen and Christian became in part united, and the next generation saw that union still more closely established. Of the issue of this marriage the first male child that lived to inherit was John, born on the 12th July, 1756, at Ewanrigg, also named after his father; and this John Christian is the subject of this memoir.

John Christian was little more than a year old when his father died (Nov. 23, 1757), and only six years old when his mother died (1762), so that in early life he must have been under the guidance and guardianship of relatives, at Ewanrigg Hall and Milntown, Isle of Man, to both of which properties he was the heir-at-law. Probably he benefited most by his uncle Henry Curwen's care of him at Workington Hall during his juvenile days. After home schooling, he was sent to Eton, and afterwards, it is believed, to Cambridge; so that he had fair opportunities of acquiring a gentlemanly education, such as the sons of good county families, or the landed

gentry of the period, obtained at a public school, with Oxford or Cambridge as a finishing stroke to the scholastic training. When there was no professional status in view for the youth, the University studies were apt to be lax and unprofitable, as was the case with Mr. Christian, whose aim most likely soared no higher than the position of a "country squire," or a Justice of the Peace; and in course of years the official courtesies of the shrievalty. Beyond studying some of the English classics, and modern history, rudimentary Latin and Greek, and making himself familiar with figures, Mr. Christian does not seem to have given himself much trouble about any higher scholarship. He felt it needful to have "a smattering of foreign tongues," to fit him for the grand tour of Europe; but his love of study cannot have been great, or he would hardly have left his *alma mater* on completing his twentieth year, and set up for master on his own account, by taking to wife Margaret, daughter of John Taubman, Esq., of Castletown. The marriage was celebrated at Kirk-Mangold church, in the Isle of Man, on the 10th September, 1776. His first wedded life, though happy in its relations in every way, was of short duration, as Mrs. Christian died in February, 1778, at Peeltown (Isle of Man), leaving issue an infant son, John Christian, who lived to fill the office of Deemster of the island, and to inherit the estates of Milntown and Ewanrigg, in which he has been succeeded by his son, the Rev. W. B. Christian, now in possession.

Mr. Christian remained a widower for upwards of four years, and during this time he made lengthened visits to the Continent, seeing France, Germany, and

Bohemia, and spending much time in Switzerland. He was not a mere tourist, lounging his time away in idle tourist fashion, but an observer of men and customs, and with special reference to the political and agricultural interests of the countries through which he passed. Wisely, for his own mental improvement and better acquaintance with the world, he sought society abroad, and entered with zest into the varied speculations, social, political, and metaphysical, occupying the thinking minds of France and Germany. His introductions to the leaders of political parties, especially in France, benefited him largely as a traveller, and subsequently aided him in his parliamentary life during the frequent discussions incidental to foreign affairs. He was most pleased with the Swiss agriculture, and the primitive habits of the people, and used to recall, in after years, the pleasure he enjoyed in witnessing the efforts of the Swiss to cultivate the terraced patches of land, and to increase the fertility of their narrow valleys—so charming and delightful for strangers to look upon.

At home, in Cumberland, Mr. Christian was the young and popular squire of Ewanrigg, both previous to and during his wedded life. He entered into the sports and social feeling of the neighbourhood, and gained numerous friends by his obligingness, his frank and agreeable manners. His chief intercourse was with his relatives at Workington Hall ; for whilst his uncle, Henry Curwen, lived, Mr. Christian naturally looked to him as his principal adviser. And when Mr. Curwen found his health giving way, and that he was about to leave an only child, a girl in her teens, he, with equal consideration, appealed

to his nephew, John Christian, to be her guardian and friend till she came of age; and this was the more expedient as John Christian was next of kin to his young cousin of Workington Hall.

The historical associations of Workington Hall would fill many volumes. Three centuries ago, when Workington was the principal seaport in Cumberland, "the Hall" enjoyed no small prestige as the "chefe howse of Sir Thomas Curwyn." When Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, landed on the English shore of the Solway, after her flight from Dundrennan, she took refuge within its walls, and was hospitably entertained by Sir Henry Curwen till the pleasure of Queen Elizabeth was known. Camden described Workington Hall as a "stately castle-like seat" in his day, and though it has undergone many changes since that period, his description is still applicable to the "old Hall," occupying an eminence on the banks of the Derwent, close to the town of Workington, and showing its stately character amid wooded surroundings.

The Curwens afford ample scope for genealogical inquiries; here, however, only a very limited survey of their history can be offered, merely sufficient to establish their general type, character, and position in the world. There are various spellings of the modern name of Curwen in ages that are past—the original being supposed to be Culwen or De Culwen; then the changes rung on De Curwen, Curwyn, and finally Curwen, since the reign of Henry VII., when Sir Christopher, who was three times High Sheriff of Cumberland, on the first occasion signed himself De Culwen, but afterwards Curwen.

No family can well claim a longer pedigree than the Curwens, and few much nobler blood in England. If a knightly ancestry originating in the Saxon kings and chiefs of the Crusades, subsequently strengthened by Gospatric, the great Earl of Northumberland, and Waldeof, first Lord of Allerdale; if Officers of State, and the companions of kings—in court, and camp, and tented field—are calculated to claim the attention of posterity, particularly when high State dignities were worn by men of true metal—then assuredly the Curwens of Workington Hall should hold their own in history. The important position held by the Curwens in Cumberland will be best judged of by the fact that eight out of ten of the family in successive descent were "Knights of the Shire." The Curwens figured as High Sheriffs,* when scions of the royal house, earls, and bishops served in the same office throughout England; amongst others may be cited Richard, Duke of Gloucester, as Sheriff of Cumberland. Sir Thomas Curwen and his brother were attached as boys to the court of Henry VII., and educated in part with the Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry VIII.; hence the great partiality exhibited by that monarch to Sir Thomas, and his offer to endow him with the possession of the rich lands of Furness Abbey. † Further

* The High Sheriff was an official magnate in mediæval days. He presided over the County Court, and enforced the feudal rights of the Crown. Sir Simon de Montfort and the barons of Henry III. reformed the office and lessened the privileges of the High Sheriff. The shrievalty in these latter days has shrunk from royal-standard bearing to a respectable sort of official mediocrities.

† "Sir Thomas Curwen, knight in Henry VIII.'s time; an excellent archer at twelvescore marks, and went up with his men to shoote with

proof of Sir Thomas Curwen's position and loyalty may be instanced. When Sir Thomas Wharton called out the Gentlemen of Cumberland upon "service of the Borders," in 1543, he assigned to each Knight or Squire the number of "Foot and Horse" that he had to muster for the said service; but against the name of Sir Thomas Curwen he wrote the words "Horse at his pleasure," thus showing the exalted opinion entertained of his patriotism by the great Tudor king and the governing powers of England. To Hugh Curwen, Archbishop of Dublin and Lord Chancellor of Ireland in Queen Elizabeth's time, historians assign the credit of being the advocate of the Reformation in Ireland, and the Queen's instrument for creating a reformed hierarchy.

Camden, one of the most illustrious of learned Englishmen, whose name adorns the great historic societies of his country, in describing the family seat* of the Curwens at Workington Hall, asks the reader to "excuse the vanity" for his saying that he is descended from the family of Curwen by his mother's side. No higher compliment could have been paid the Curwens than for the author of the "Britannia"

that renowned king at the dissolution of Abbeys; and the king says to him, 'Curwen, why doth thee beg none of these abbeys? I wold gratify thee some way.' Quoth the other, 'Thank you;' and afterwards said, he wold desire of him the Abbie of Ffurness (nye unto him) for twenty-one yeares. Sayes the King, 'Take it for ever.' Quoth the other, 'It is long enough, for you'll set them up again in that time.' But they not likely to be set up againe; this Sir Thos. Curwen sent Mr. Preston, who married his daughter, to renew the lease for him, and he even renewed in his own name; which, when his Father-in-law questioned, quoth Mr. Preston, 'You shall have it as long as you live; and I think I may as well have it with your daughter as another.'" —*Sandford's "MS. History of Cumberland."*

* "Historical Traditions of Workington Hall and Kirkcudbright."

to be proud of his alliance with them. Here was the scholar, the topographer, and the historian of the period rejoicing that he possessed a moiety of Curwen blood in his system. Possibly, his striving after the immortality that learned erudition should confer, had a directing impulse in this faint tracing of Curwen lineage, along with a desire to uphold its nobleness and fair fame in the eyes of posterity. His vanity is worth noting; for should the present representatives of Workington Hall die out, or should they sink below the horizon of fame (and greater improbabilities have happened to families born to wealth and distinction, but who, lacking the true regard for ancestral honours, failed to preserve them), their position up to the reign of Queen Elizabeth will be read in that page of Camden, and the words "excuse the vanity" will stand a significant memorial to their high character and public worth, Others, it is to be hoped, will arise in the 19th century, in imitation of Camden's family reverence, whose vanity will seek solace in tracing their origin to the Curwen (John Christian) who shone among the great parliamentary men in the zenith of George the Third's reign, and who, as a member of the Opposition, carried through the House of Commons one of the best economic measures that became law in the times of George the Fourth; and who, in the capacity of landowner and country gentleman, gave so strong an impetus to modern farming as to have earned for himself the high distinction of being the "Father of Agriculture" in his own and other neighbouring counties. For let John Christian be viewed as Christian, or as he became Curwen, Manx or Cumbrian in blood (and

he was both), there is no questioning the accepted opinion of the day, that he was a man of great public note and usefulness.

With the death of Henry Curwen, Esq., the Curwen family at Workington Hall had nearly become extinct, as he left no male heir, and but one daughter, Isabella, who was only thirteen years old at his decease. Workington Hall, from 1778 to 1782, had but one occupant—Isabella Curwen, the last of her race; Ewanrigg Hall, though not in the same plight as to family succession, had only a widower in residence—John Christian, as the stay and hope of the Cumberland Christians;* so that the two neighbouring manors were represented by John Christian and Isabella Curwen, who stood in the relationship of first cousins to each other. What could appear more politic than that the two neighbours, heir and heiress, should unite their hands and estates, especially as John Christian had the first claim to the great Workington property, if his cousin should die without issue. Whether love or policy directed the consummation, John Christian of Ewanrigg was happy to join his fortunes with Isabella Curwen, sole heiress of the famous Henry Curwen of Workington Hall. The marriage took place at Edinburgh on the 5th October, 1782—the bride having a few days previously attained the happy age of "sweet seventeen." Mr. Christian and his young bride soon settled down at Workington,

* John Christian had several sisters. Jane is the only one likely to interest Cumberland readers, as, by her marriage with Dr. William Blamire, of the Hollingbush, or "the Oaks," near Dalston, she became the mother of the distinguished Tithe Commissioner William Blamire. Her character will be recognized, in relation to her son's history, in a subsequent page of this volume.

making "the Hall" festivities of 1782-3 equal to the palmy days of their predecessor, Henry Curwen, and they were said to have been amongst the most memorable of the century.

In 1784, Mr. Christian filled the office of High Sheriff with great *éclat*, gaining for himself among his brother magistrates that character for generous hospitality that marked him in his home relations. He also obtained a good name with the citizens of Carlisle during his shrievalty, and this helped to bring about a more intimate acquaintance with the lieges of the "merrie city," in 1786, when they wished for a parliamentary representative.

CHAPTER II.

Carlisle Politically a Century ago. Sir James Lowther, Mayor! The Whigs and Mr. Howard. "Mushroom Voters." Mr. Christian elected for Carlisle, 1786—Petitions Parliament against the illegal acts of Lord Lonsdale—Assumes the Name of Curwen, and Contests Carlisle in 1790. Final decision of the House of Commons regarding the Carlisle Freemen. The Election Riots and Chairing.

ARLISLE, though strongly garrisoned and cathedrally blessed, was in imminent risk of being politically cursed a century ago. The city had a small population, little business, and less public enterprise; hence the danger of its becoming subservient to the ruling powers within its walls, or falling a political prey to one of the manorial lords in its vicinity—a pocket borough to the highest bidder and best-filled purse. Situated within ten miles of the Borders, and the doings of *the forty-five* still fresh in the memory of its inhabitants, no wonder Carlisle felt apprehensive of the Scottish Celt, and somewhat indifferent to commerce; and, at the same time, regardless of her franchised privileges when tempted by the proffered largess of scheming and political adventurers. Carlisle stood between two fires—one threatened her goods and chattels; the other sought to destroy her political honour: the inroads of the Scotch might be bad, but the profligate seduction of the Lowthers was worse.

Encroachments had been made upon the rights of the citizens, early in the (18th) century, by the Corporation itself; but this was trifling compared with the larger and more determined encroachments of Sir James Lowther, Baronet, whose wish, as a future page will show, was to swamp the independence of the Freemen; to make the Carlisle Town-hall a Lowther *bureau*, and the city itself a political appanage of Lowther Castle. In 1761-2 a dissolution of Parliament took place, and Sir James Lowther tried to carry his nominee, General Stanwix, the Governor of Carlisle Castle, for the city, but was thwarted by Henry Curwen, of Workington Hall—uncle and father-in-law to John Christian. Discomfiture only sharpened the intriguing spirit of the Lowther baronet, who, in furtherance of his views, availed himself of his interest with the majority of the Corporation, about the year 1763, to procure for himself the position of "honorary freeman" of the city.*

This was the first step to a seat in the Corporation; the second aimed at an alderman's gown; and the final move and crowning object was the mayoralty itself. And so it came to pass; in 1765, Sir James Lowther was elected Mayor of Carlisle! The richest baronet in England "seeking the honour" of presiding over the Common Council of a city with less than 5,000 inhabitants, simply meant a wish to usurp the political privileges of the freemen, and to destroy what remained of public integrity in the city itself. His mayoralty was marked by official changes of every

* The Mayor of Carlisle, on his accession to office, had the privilege of making one honorary freeman—which accounts for a number of gentlemen in the county being found in the lists of city freemen.

kind, from aldermen to beadledom, and all pointing Lowtherwards.

The election of 1768 soon followed, and both city and county were contested by the Lowthers, and in a manner so regardless of expense that the two elections are said to have cost £100,000!* The Blues (Whigs)† kept their place in the city; but in 1774 they were jockeyed by the wily Baronet getting the writ for the new election into the hands of the Mayor of Carlisle before the news of the decision of Parliament had reached the city. This was accomplished by special messengers galloping in "hot haste" from London. Only 164 freemen could be got together for the Blue candidate; but this spirited band attracted the attention of Mr. Howard, of Greystoke—afterwards Earl of Surrey and Duke of Norfolk—who called them plucky fellows worth fighting for, and that he would fight for them any day. At the election of 1780, Mr. Howard was as good as his promise, and fought and won one of the seats. He was also returned in 1784, along with Mr. Norton, a Tory, who died in 1786, causing another vacancy in the representation.

Sir James Lowther was created Earl of Lonsdale in May, 1784—no doubt for his inflexible attachment

* Henry Curwen, of Workington Hall, beat the Lowthers for the County at this election—the greatest, and by far the most costly, in the annals of Cumberland, or possibly of George III.'s reign; it lasted 42 days, though only 4,000 freeholders voted. Mr. Curwen's defiance of the Lowthers won for him general applause; the yeomen ever afterwards designated him "the brave Harry Curwen."

† In Cumberland the Whigs have always hoisted *blue* banners, the Tories, *yellow* ones. "*Blues*" and "*Yellows*" are more frequently in use than Whig and Tory.

to the British Constitution, and his readiness to spend tens of thousands in upholding the purity of parliamentary elections! The titles he obtained with the earldom are too numerous to quote; but it is essential to mention that he was Lord Lieutenant, Custos Rotulorum, Vice-Admiral, and Colonel of the Militias, as proofs of the immense influence wielded by him as civil and military ruler of the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland. The danger of investing such large powers in one man's hands, and those hands far from clean, became demonstrable enough in the following year.

Being frustrated in his wish to return two members for Carlisle, and as the old freemen could not be cajoled by bribes or promises, he conceived the plan of making new freemen out of his own creatures—tenants and dependants. It was a notable device, and with the connivance of Jeremiah Wherlings, who was Mayor in 1785, the Earl got 1,447 individuals — significantly termed, from the rapidity of their growth, *Mushrooms*—admitted as freemen, without reference to birth or servitude, and without any legal right or title whatever!* This bold stroke of arbitrary power—and English history can furnish no parallel to it—was effected, let it be re-

* The Earl of Lonsdale for the creation of these voters was ever afterwards called "the Toadstool Earl," but who performed the part of the Carlisle *Ajax* to the Lowther *Thersites* is not known. *Ajax*, it may be remembered, addresses *Thersites*—"Toad's-stool, learn me the proclamation," the very words that a Carlisle freeman might have inquired the meaning of the new enfranchisement of the Earl of Lonsdale; and knowing its import, might aptly have added, in the words of *Achilles:*

"How now, thou core of envy?
Thou crusty batch of Nature——"

membered, in the first year of his earldom—a pretty diadem in the new coronet! The freemen of Carlisle were naturally indignant at this despotic procedure, and with the concurrence of the Earl of Surrey, the Whig member, called a meeting to condemn Lord Lonsdale's conduct, and at the same time they agreed to ask John Christian, of Workington Hall, to offer himself as a candidate for the vacancy created by Mr. Norton's death, and in opposition to Mr. John Lowther, the kinsman of Lord Lonsdale.

Mr. Christian was known to be of the same liberal politics as the Curwens, and as ready to fight a good fight as his uncle, "Harry Curwen," or his direct ancestors, and to have cultivated the friendship of the Howards, the Duke of Portland, and other representatives of the old Whigs in Cumberland; so that on his entering Carlisle in April, 1786, as a candidate for the suffrages of the citizens, he came with a good name and a good backing, and in the faith of a good cause. The election took place, and Mr. Christian polled nearly five legal votes to one of Mr. Lowther's—483 against 102. Upon this, Mr. Lowther offered 428 fictitious votes (mushrooms), which Richard Jackson, the mayor, accepted as *bona-fide* votes, and then officially declared the said John Lowther duly elected!

On the 18th April, Mr. Christian issued a highly-spirited address to his supporters, and promised he would fight the battle of the citizens in the House of Commons; and so actively did he exert himself on this behoof, that on the 31st May a committee of "the House" caused John Lowther to be ousted from his mushroom-bed by declaring John Christian

M.P. for Carlisle. Most men would have shrunk from so bold a business as opposing the Earl of Lonsdale in parliament—a man of vast wealth, and possessing the advantage of having his political friends in power. Happily for Carlisle, that a man like Mr. Christian came to its rescue, and saved it from thraldom and debasement. His conduct was appreciated by his constituents, highly applauded by the gentlemen of Cumberland, and not less by the country at large. The blue flag, under which the battle of the Carlisle citizens was fought, never waved more triumphantly than in the year 1786 over the head of John Christian: the same blue flag was retained in Mr. Christian's possession for 35 years—the token of honesty over corruption, and of right against wrong.

As if this defeat and exposure by the House of Commons were not enough, the Earl of Lonsdale played the same game in November of the same year, when by the transfer of the Earl of Surrey to the House of Peers as Duke of Norfolk, a vacancy arose in the representation of Carlisle. Mr. R. Stephenson, the Whig, had the majority of legal votes;* Mr. Knubley, the Tory, had the "mushrooms" at his disposal, and was declared by the yellow mayor—duly elected. Another committee of the Commons decided against the Lowther nominee; but such was the effrontery of the Earl, that it did not stop here,

* It was at this election that Sir James Boswell—the Bozzy of Samuel Johnson—was consulted, in his capacity of Recorder of the city, as to the legality of Mr. Stephenson being chaired; and this seems to have been the only occasion when he appeared in political matters.

and would have had no stopping-place if a Christian had not led the forlorn hope against this arch-enemy of human rights.

On the 1st March, 1790, John Christian assumed the surname and arms of Curwen, by virtue of the king's sign-manual, and will now be spoken of as John Christian Curwen. In the same year there was a dissolution of parliament, and Mr. Curwen and Mr. Wilson Bradyll came forward on the Whig interest for Carlisle, and polled a large majority of the freemen; but Jeremiah Wherlings, who had helped the manufacture of the "mushroom voters" in 1785, was again in office as mayor, and accepted them as legal, and declared Messrs. Satterthwaite and Knubley, the Tory candidates, members for the city. Of course, Messrs. Curwen and Bradyll petitioned parliament against this illegal procedure. Could imposition and audacity go further than this third attempt of Lord Lonsdale and his creatures (Wherlings and others) to violate the privileges of "the Commons," as they had already trampled upon the rights of the Carlisle burgesses? The House of Commons had twice affirmed its opinion on the question, so that another repetition of gross unconstitutional procedure coming from the same quarter was no longer to be borne.

In March, 1791, the "House" not only declared Messrs. Curwen and Bradyll duly elected, but, to set the matter at rest for the future, came to the following resolution:—"That the right of election for the city of Carlisle, in the county of Cumberland, is in the freemen of the said city, duly admitted and sworn freemen of the said city, having been previously

admitted brethren of one of the eight guilds or occupations of the said city, and deriving their title to such freedom by being sons of freemen, or by service of seven years' apprenticeship to a freeman, resident during such apprenticeship within the said city, and no other."

It was at this 1790 election that Lord Lonsdale introduced a great number of colliers, and others in his direct employment, into the city, armed with bludgeons, to act the desperado part against Curwen, and notably to assail him on the chairing day. Had Curwen not been aware of their threatened ruffianism, he would have been sacrificed in the streets; as it was, he owed his life to the noble defence of his phalanxed friends, and in part to his own ingenuity. In spite of the pavement being torn up, and the stones used as missiles against him and his party, and wounding not a few, he would not be baulked of his "chairing"; so fell upon the happy expedient of carrying a freeman's son in his arms—a boy, whose chubby cheeks and laughing innocence, bedecked in white and blue, and contrasting with the tall form and daring of Curwen, touched all hearts. "Bless the bonny boy!" echoed from every feminine voice in window and balcony, and was taken up with lusty vigour by the noisier women who thronged the streets. Curwen, seeing that he had enlisted the protection of the sex who always had a warm side towards him, felt quite at home upon his blue platform; and bowing with his usual happy carriage, and now and then pointing to the "youthful blossom"—dangling its own blue ribbons with joy, conveyed by his expressive features a thousand thanks to the people; and with a gracious-

ness that flattered and overcame all. Even the savagery of the "yellow roughs" was quelled and calmed for the hour; but when Curwen and his "young blue" got safely housed at the Grapes Hotel, it broke out with double furor. No other word could convey the shameless violence of a set of heathenish men filled with drink, and egged on to the destruction of both lives and property. These ruffians were described with tolerable accuracy as springing—

> From Whitehaven, Shap, from each coal-pit and fell,
> Customary tenants and colliers like Hell.

The respectable inhabitants seeing the lives of innocent persons sacrificed, at last got roused, and, like men in defence of their hearths, fought both with courage and aim, and after a time turned the tables on their assailants, driving them to "Mushroom Hall," the Earl of Lonsdale's quarters in Fisher Street, and finally expelling the worst of the mob from the city by the Irish Gates. The outrages of these collier gangs—men hired and bribed by the Lord-Lieutenant—created a reactionary feeling in the city that could hardly be assuaged; and the Blues, acting on the principle set forth by the Scottish Reformer, John Knox, with reference to Romish churches, "Destroy the nests, and the rooks cannot build," attacked Mushroom Hall, and did their best to level it with the ground.

CHAPTER III.

The Carlisle Election of 1796—its costliness in Bribes and Bacchanals. A Picture of the City and Citizens. Curwen at the Head of the Poll. Death of Lord Lonsdale. The Elections till 1812.

FOR six years Carlisle was as quiet politically as the wranglings of a small town would permit; then came the Election of 1796—credited with being the longest in duration, the worst for bribery, and the most "beery" of the century. Mr. Curwen and Sir F. Vane, Bart., the Whigs, had opponents in Sir J. Graham, of Netherby, and Mr. Knubley, Lowther nominees. The reproof, as final as it was fatal to his character, that Lord Lonsdale received from the House of Commons in 1790 made him politically desperate in 1796. As the "Mushroom freemen" were no longer available, he sought to beguile the electors with money and fulsome promises. Golden guineas were chinked in the ear of the needy, and places and emoluments guaranteed the doubtful voters. The man who lacked courage and steady purpose soon lost his political virtue, and became fettered in yellow chains and moral serfdom. As the Lowthers could not overthrow Curwen politically, they were resolute in damaging him pecuniarily, by keeping the poll open to the last hour allowed by law; and

seventeen days, from the 8th to the 24th June, including Sundays, were spent over the election proper, to say nothing of the many weeks' preparation for the contest. The expenses of each day, or rather of each hour, were frightfully large; nevertheless Curwen would not yield, as he felt the popular cause was in his keeping, and he must maintain it at all hazard and at all cost—even years of income and pecuniary anxiety. The local bard might well sing,—

> Corruption's a sink that'll puzzen the country,
> And lead us to slavery, to me it seems plain;
> But he that has courage to stem the black torrent,
> True Britons sud pray for agean and agean.

Mr. Curwen was the only man in the county "to stem the black torrent," strong as it naturally was at the backing of a Lord-Lieutenant of unscrupulous power, and ready to wield it,—to whose office are attached as insignia the Bible, the Sword, and Rod of Justice. Alas for the outward signs, when an inward yet visible gracelessness marked all the doings of this lordly governor! As at sea the yellow flag implies plague and pestilence on board; so on land, in these party struggles led on by the Lowthers, its presence marked a moral plague—corruptible as the worst corruption. This 1796 election made a life-long impression upon every witness of its workings, and, like a national event or local calamity, it became an epoch, or time-memorial, around which domestic and other events were clustered and remembered far into the following century.

Curwen was the chieftain of many a fight with the Lowthers from first to last, and the Lowthers were the chief of sinners as to the use of money and the

abuse of power for electioneering purposes; and to their struggles for power may be owing the fact that Carlisle, in the days of Horace Walpole, had a bad name at head-quarters for its riots and radicalism. A glance at the "Border City" during this great contest is essential to the biography of Curwen, who was the Hamlet of the play, and played his part nobly and well; nor can a sketch of the election be altogether unacceptable to those who care for the historical past. The party spirit so virulently demonstrated by their forefathers seventy years ago, will appear in strong colouring to the present generation, born since the Reform Bill of 1832, and enjoying what may fairly be considered these piping times of political peace.

The election took place in June, and though the days were the longest they seemed far too short for the work to be done. The eating, drinking, rallying, and fighting of the Carlisle lieges seldom came to a close with the setting sun, or the long northern twilight. Agents and canvassers, post-boys and pot-fillers showed most mobility; the two former were ever on the alert as hawks by day or jackals by night, for the prey of men—to be had for a price; the two latter were not less busy, especially the "drawers" for men of more than Falstaffian gauge in potation, though of lean and hungry look compared with the knight of the portly paunch. Strong ale—the "sack" of the times—was everywhere abundant and ever forthcoming at call, but the ha'penny worth of political virtue was almost nowhere visible to either gods or men in the ancient city. To the early riser—like Curwen, walking from his lodgings through the

Scotch gates to the river side to get a breath of fresh air, or a draught of Hyssop's spring—what a sight did the city streets present of pools of beer, lumps of discarded food—bread, beef, and cheese; fragments of dress belonging to both sexes, who had struggled and fought to reach the spigots of the "Old Brewery" barrels tapped at yesterday's sunset; of trampled sheets of print—the inspiration of the poet, the invective of the satirist, and the appeals of the patriot in rags and tatters, lying in dirty waste, along with other debris of the mortal and material sort.

Of the "mortal sort" there were the British electors who had been sailing with the flow-tide and "top-gallants" to the breeze—wanting ballast and utterly regardless of the perils of the night. Some had lost their reckoning, and come to grief by the steps of the market-cross; some had fallen heavily astern by the "old guard-house;" whilst others in steering for the Moot-hall and polling-booth to fight their battles o'er again, had succumbed to the curbstone and gutters at the threshold of their City's glory. You talk of sacrifices for the public weal and self-denying patriotism, and cite Aristides banished, and Rome's great Cæsar fallen! Look here at the Carlisle elector, so free, so independent, and so virtuous, with his yellow ribbon at his button-hole, proving him to be of the constitutional "House of Lowther." See how he, overcome by the genius that presides over his fate, has struggled to reach the forum of the city and the hall of his liberties, like a true Roman; but, alas! in vain. What is Cæsar, stabbed at the base of Pompey's pillar, crying out "*Et tu Brute!*" compared with the very "Pompey" himself in the shape of an English

citizen martyred by the god of his idolatry, and ejaculating with the last cadence of his sensibility, "Lowther and yellow for ever!" By the doors of noted hostelries, as if still hankering after flesh-pots vastly richer than those of Egypt, men slept their alcoholic sleep and snored amain; and along the narrow lanes—musty in odour and yeasty in surface—similar victims sought for water supply to quench their fiery gullets, but were too blazed to find the pump, or, when found, to render its handle applicable to their wants.

At six o'clock in the morning the fife and drums resounded with,—

Hey, Johnny Cope, are ye wauken yet?

as a challenge to fresh combat; and barelegged boys joined in the march, and by their huzzas and contentions roused the city from its slumbers. Whilst Boniface of the "Dragon" came to the door in his shirt sleeves, unhosed and highly "seedy," to yawn and stretch his unhallowed limbs; and the maid of the "Angel" smartened up the porch, and offered smiling welcome to fresh customers and thirsty souls; the artisan not cursed with a vote was wending his honest way to the shop, the factory, or the forge. Soon the shops are opened, and eager politicians gather together to discuss the prospects of another day. By ten o'clock the polling-booth is prepared for voters, but before this, the political day had begun with much running to and fro, and much display of officialism; and that greater display of busy-bodies seeking for the nonce to be noticed in a crowd. Mr. Curwen was far from idle. From an early breakfast to the close

of each day's poll he was constantly engaged, advising and directing as the captain of his political agency, who knew human nature vastly better than the paid attorneys. When seen on the streets he was run after, and had to joke or talk with every intruder. He was the hero of the day, and a kind of Apollo to the other sex; now canvassing, now encouraging the lukewarm, now inspiring his friends, and, when hard pressed, courting the voter's wife for the voter's vote, and infusing his own spirit of enthusiasm in every direction.

The first "tally of voters" on its way from the "Grapes" or "Blue Bell"—then the favoured political inns—was the signal for cheering, hooting, and hissing, with blows and kicks on the part of the belligerents; and now and then such a fracas that voters were carried off *nolens volens* to the enemy's camp, and perhaps the man who had been brought to Carlisle and fed by the yellows found his only safety in voting for the blues, and *vice versâ*. Coercion and physical force arguments were hard to resist, so that two or three voters often required a band of thirty men to protect them across the street. In the lull of voting, groups of people have occupied the frontage of a printer's shop, a fresh address has just been issued, and there are loud cheers for Lowther. Another shop has attracted the blues, and an uproarious laugh is heard, with cheers and counter cheers; a squib headed by a rough woodcut representing an earl in a "jump Jim Crow" fashion on the top of a toadstool, has caused all the merriment; and every young urchin who possessed a copy is imitating the Lowther in his antics. The printer's devil contributed largely to the fun of the

hour by his songs, lampoons, and parodies. Every issue of the press drew its coterie—many to hear as well as to read; for whilst the Blues and Yellows were contending for "the honour and support" of the electors, a large number of these coveted worthies could not read the proclamation of their liberties; or the addresses so pointedly made to their "high intelligence" by the candidates for their votes! Curwen deplored this state of things, knowing that if a tithe of the money spent at elections, and for the basest of purposes, had been devoted to the education and enlightenment of the citizens, how much good would have resulted, and not the least, in his eyes, that allegiance to his opponents found its greatest support in the ignorance and poverty of the electors.

The "old Guild-Hall" with its mediæval ornaments lightened up by the heraldic banners of the trades floating from its windows, was as much an object of interest as the Town-hall itself; and from its thronged portals issued men in holiday attire and high enjoyment. Each Guild was more or less divided in party feeling: the butchers, however, generally followed the colour of their coats (blue), while the shoemakers, mustered by one of their own guild—Sir John Sewell,* knight, and LL.D.—went strongly in for the yellows. Banners and party devices graced the houses of the chief citizens and public-houses, and bands of music cheered the quarters of the respective candidates. In the interim, street fiddlers scraped their catgut suc-

* Sir John Sewell was at one time Governor of one of the West India Islands. The Sewells of Newlands, near Carlisle, were his Cumberland relations.

cessfully; and ballad-singers of city gossip, rhymed to a popular air, drew both company and coppers; nor was the bellman, with his sham proclamations and announcements, less an object of popular applause. If the June weather was hot, the throats of the lieges were hotter, and political enthusiasm hottest of all. Whirl and excitement prevailed on the streets, and high wrangling within doors, whereas in some of the publics,

> Parsons, horse-coupers, and fiddlers,
> Sat higgledy-pickledy—all fare alike.

Business was at a standstill, excepting for gastronomical wants—the consumption of victuals being great, and only surpassed in force by the tippling of beer and grog.

Now a cheer is heard from the suburbs, a yellow flag is seen waving over a coachful of voters, and shouting, clamour, and party cries attend the fresh arrival. This stir has hardly subsided when a postchaise of Blues comes into sight, and with it are heard cheers, personalities, and abuse. The leading men of both sides could hardly stir without being assailed in one shape or other by their opponents; indeed, there was provocation, and gall, and bitterness everywhere. As one event passed over, another took its place; for hundreds of loungers were on the look-out for amusement, and the same jostling, running, and yelling prevailed throughout the day; and with the advancing hours, and greater imbibition of drink, the noise became more noisy, the threatenings louder, and the actions of the combatant parties more offensive.

As it approached four o'clock, when the state of the poll had to be announced, the market-place got thronged with anxious partisans and "rough-spun customers," to hear the addresses of the candidates. Curwen had generally a "let off" at the subterfuges of the 'Yellows, and the unfairness of the game practised by the Lowthers. No man in England had greater powers over a hustings or polling-booth mob; for whatever the opposition might be, he could in a few minutes calm "the roughs" by cracking a joke at the expense of a noisy declaimer, or asking if foul-mouthed language was to be tolerated by the worthy electors in presence of the fair sex—their wives and daughters.

If the six hours of polling were opposed to all peace and morality, the six hours that followed were still more disturbing to the honest lieges. Carlisle seemed embroiled in a seething caldron of agitation, noise, rancour, and hate. The air was contaminated with beer and tobacco—exhalations and impurities of all sorts. Water was scarce, cleanliness scarcer, and scavengers scarcest of all. The electoral mind seemed steeped in noxiousness; and the incense offered up by the squires, baroneted candidates, and Lowther "Rabbi" to the franchised citizens, was morally an incense to sordid gains and corrupt motives, and physically an incense to Bacchus, or the dirtier deity, Silenus.

Curwen and Vane had large majorities; the former was at the head of the poll, and only polled 432 men during the fifteen days! How different to-day, when the same number can be recorded in four hours, and in so quiet a way as hardly to disturb the watery life of

"permissive law" sticklers, or to increase the twinge in the extremities of gouty ecclesiastics!

The year 1796 witnessed Curwen's third struggle for a seat in Parliament, and his third success. This statement hardly conveys the gist of the matter, as in 1786 and 1790 he had to fight two battles for each of his returns—namely, in Carlisle at the polling-booth, where he fought for himself; and in London before a Committee of the House of Commons, where he fought for the privileges of the Carlisle freemen; so that when returned at this last election, '96, he had literally had five contests to obtain three sittings in Parliament. To have had five pitched battles with an antagonist—the richest and most unscrupulous enemy to political freedom then living—speaks volumes in favour of the public spirit and indomitable pluck of Curwen. To leave the enjoyments of rural life, the lovely vale of Derwent and the fresh breezes of the Solway, for the noise and turmoil of urban feuds, was a trial to Curwen, who loved his home and his farm; and the days of canvass, the hustings mob, the worry and danger of life which he had to experience, would have tested the man of strongest nerves, even in those days when nerves were said to be unknown.

The Earl of Lonsdale died on the 4th May, 1802, at the age of sixty-four years—forty-two of which were spent in a self-seeking political life and the usurpation of power. Within a month of the earl's death, Curwen tried to heal the differences which the spirit of party had created in Carlisle. He sought to do away with every trace of the mushroom voters, and to promote those measures likely to give security and

prosperity to the city. His conciliating spirit was appreciated, and greatly helped to remove the rancorous feeling that had been engendered by the "Bad Earl."*

A dissolution of Parliament took place in 1802, and some understanding seems to have been entered into by the political parties of Carlisle, as Curwen now got a colleague in Mr. Stanhope, recommended to the electors by William, the new Earl of Lonsdale—the Whig and Tory walking over the course. This quiet affair coming directly after the great battle of 1796, was too great a novelty to the burgesses, however desirable it might be to the custodians of the peace to see the election over on the nomination day. There was a general murmuring among the lower class of the citizens and citizenesses, who asked if Carlisle was to lose its electioneering repute for rows in the market-place and rowdyism in the suburbs. How could it be an election without a series of fights —without barrels of beer, bludgeons, and bestialities? Some blamed Curwen for compromising, whilst the sensible portion of "the Blues" approved of the arrangement (if it were to be viewed as such) between the two opposing parties, in the belief that the new Lord of Lowther would not attempt any of the innovations that marked his predecessor's connection with the borough. The latter well-meaning folk dis-

* The term "Bad Earl" is quoted from the history of the "governing families" of England. A study of the Carlisle elections and Cumberland judicial courts for the last hundred years would have enabled the able editors of that volume to have arrived at a more correct knowledge of an earl who "had the honour of forcing Parliament to pass an Act to restrain his injustice."

covered the fallacy of their opinions as to the new occupant of Lowther Castle, and that no constituency can halve its independence; or as Curwen, who had been ready to act generously towards his opponents, subsequently remarked, that "a corrupt influence can never be beneficially amalgamated with a pure one." Matters, however, remained in *statu quo* as far as the representation of Carlisle was concerned, till 1812—Curwen and Stanhope being the members in possession.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Curwen in Parliament—An advanced Liberal—Quarrels with Burke—a Scene. Opposes Pitt and the Court. The "Friends of the People." Curwen speaks strongly, and is ranked with the Chiefs of the Old Minority.

EARLY in the summer of 1786, Mr. Curwen* entered Parliament—accompanied to the Speaker's chair by Mr. Coke, of Norfolk, and took his seat among the Whigs, then occupying the Opposition benches. A critical period was dawning in Europe, and things looked ominous in France. Alongside the corruptive influences of the Court at Versailles, the seeds of the philosophic Encyclopædists had been germinating for years; and the revolutionary growth soon overtopped that of royalty, and displayed in the uncouth forms of Mirabeau, and others, men of terrific speech and power, who incensed the masses, so that with the fall of the leaf in 1789 came the inevitable downfall of the Bourbon dynasty. Nothing could stem the tide; even the stately Lafayette, with heart and soul in the people's cause, had to give way; then came the Girondists, flowing in oratory and patriotism; and they

* In using the name of Curwen, the writer is anticipating three or four years, but as the reader is familiar with the name—the one attached to the House of Commons character of the subject of these pages—it seems best to adopt it at once.

were overthrown by the Marats and St. Justs, who swept away with a foul blast the noblest men and women of the time—the glorious Madame Roland, the maid and martyr Charlotte Corday—leaving *sans-culottism* and the guillotine masters of the situation; and these in turn became levelled with the earth by that great psychological phenomenon, the Corsican who rode through the storm of that awful period, and anchored in a new empire—the Napoleonic. As the storm began to blow on the other side of the Channel, Englishmen of all classes got deeply interested, and Curwen, like other Liberals, sided with the French people, and became a strong democrat for a time. His visits to France had increased his interest in the proceedings of the Republic.

Mr. Curwen soon made himself known in the House of Commons. His own name as Christian was historical, and his wife's name was on the roll of English worthies; and but a few years had elapsed since his father-in-law, Henry Curwen, sat on the same benches. These circumstances bespoke a favourable hearing for him in an assembly as proud of lineage and good blood as it is of meritorious action. Curwen, however, owed more to his own force of character than any collateral influences. However strongly his bias might be shown as Whig or Liberal, his sentiments, whenever he addressed the House on matters within his own domain, were listened to as the opinions of a truly independent member. This character for independence had been well earned by his bearding *the* Lowther in his northern den, and exposing the "Bad Earl" before two committees of the Commons. In those days of political corruption, when the oft-

quoted saying of Sir R. Walpole's that "Every man had his price" was as applicable as ever to Parliamentary representatives, the bearing of straightforward men like Curwen was the more noticeable, and their utterances—eloquent or otherwise—more valued on account of the honest feeling with which they were credited. Curwen felt his way without any attempts at rhetorical flourish; and though dogmatic enough in some things, he seemed for a time to rest his general opinions on the great authorities of his party, rather than aim at any originality of views, or any ill-timed expression of them.

Political economy was but little studied, and not likely to engage the strictly agricultural members, the majority of whom plumed themselves more on being the followers of a party than students of a dry science. It was not so with Curwen, who read and reflected much on the history of politics, and carefully examined the records of commercial economists; indeed, his chief merit rested on a knowledge of facts, and the power of handling these effectively in debate. The figures then extant on matters statistical and political were scanty and ill-digested, so that a man of but limited acquaintance with the general principles of political economy had a fair chance of gaining the attention of the "collective wisdom" of George the Third's reign, provided he had tact and discrimination in the application of his figures to current legislation. Economic science in England fared badly amidst the struggles of party, to which almost everything else was sacrificed, and particularly so about the period of Curwen's joining the ranks of the Commons. The times were the most exciting that

had occurred since the accession of William the Third. As Europe was in agitation, and France menacing, home politics could scarcely get a hearing in the British Parliament, so busily engaged were the great minds of the nation in discussing the policy to be pursued by England in the impending struggle across the Channel—a struggle not so much between Monarchy and Republicanism, as between this latter and a nameless anarchy or devildom that had taken possession of France.

Curwen could not be overlooked in any assembly. He was of commanding stature, and though his deportment might be a little rough, it was not so inappropriate to his style of speaking. His fine neck helped to throw his face forward, and to give his head great mobility of action; and his large nose gave a distinct mark to his physiognomy; whilst his voice, his words, and gesture showed him as strikingly earnest in debate, as he was in will and power. He was free from ambiguity, both as to the words he used and the purpose he aimed at, so that he was well understood; and as the integrity of his motives was never questioned, his opinions received a larger share of notice than usually falls to members in their first decade of Parliamentary life. He soon passed through the noviciateship of the House of Commons, its forms and formulas, and came to be looked upon as a promising and effective speaker, and by the close of the century to be ranked among the advanced second class—and this was no small distinction in the palmy days of Fox, Grattan, and Romilly.

On joining the great council of St. Stephen's, Curwen was just thirty years of age, and fortunately

for his own spirit of emulation, as well as teaching, his entry into public life was during that glorious epoch of Parliamentary eloquence when Pitt and Fox, Burke and Sheridan, shone with vivid splendour—almost matchless in the annals of England, and not inaptly compared to the Demosthenic and Ciceronian displays in classical history. To have sat on the same benches with these statesmen, to have listened to their persuasive words, their well-arranged arguments, their apt quotations, classical and poetical, their logic and incisive satire, their lofty declamations, their fervid eloquence and passionate appeals—appeals which stirred the hearts of men, and carried their thoughts far beyond the claims of party—could not fail to impress Mr. Curwen with high regard for his renowned contemporaries, and the character of the assembly they so truly and so nobly adorned. He used to speak of the great pleasure, if not pride, that he felt in being an Englishman enjoying Parliamentary position during that grand epoch in our history. No man could be more thoroughly English or more thoroughly patriotic in feeling than Curwen. The country's good was his motto at all times. He sought the promotion and security of the national interests, and the extension of commercial enterprise; and the only difficulty he saw in the accomplishment of these ends was the faultiness of the Parliament itself—the reform of which he earnestly solicited, and tried to establish. He valued the party of progress—then budding into life and struggling for sunshine against the cramping influence of a corrupt executive and the etiolating effects of an overpowering aristocratic shade—and laboured heartily in its further develop-

ment; but he loved patriotism better than party, and adhered to this noble principle throughout his public career.

Allusion has been made to Curwen's first visit to France, and his approval of the Democratic movement—an approval shared in by nearly all the Whigs, and a large section of his countrymen, who little dreamt of the anarchy and bloody despotism that *sans-culottism* would exhibit after it had stamped out the monarchy. In the debates of Parliament on our French relations, Curwen had not said much, and his views do not seem to have been known to one at least of the great leaders of the Commons. On that memorable night, soon after the opening of Parliament in 1790, when Burke made such an onslaught on Fox for his republican opinions, and when the greatest excitement prevailed on the adjournment of the House, Curwen, who had witnessed it all, and inwardly condemned the "cold-blooded" attack, and Pitt for applauding it, encountered Burke at the door of the Commons; and what followed had better be given in Curwen's own words.

"Whilst I was waiting for my carriage, Mr. Burke came up, and requested, as the night was wet, that I would set him down. I could not refuse, though I felt a reluctance in complying. As soon as the carriage door was shut, he complimented me on being no friend to the revolutionary doctrines of the French, on which he spoke with greath warmth for a few minutes, when he paused to afford me an opportunity of approving the view he had taken of those measures in the House. Former experience* had taught me

* His former experience should be noted. Curwen's speeches and

the consequence of dissenting from his opinions, yet at the moment I could not help feeling disinclined to stifle my sentiments. In a few words I declared that I differed most completely from him—that I sincerely wished to every nation a constitution as free as our own, and that the cause of liberty might triumph all over the world! Mr. Burke, catching hold of the check-string, furiously exclaimed, 'You are one of these people!—set me down!' With some difficulty I restrained him. We had then reached Charing Cross. Silence ensued, which was preserved till we reached his house—Gerard Street—when he hurried out of the carriage without speaking; and thus our intercourse ended."

In 1792, Mr. Curwen, a few members of Parliament, and some of the more advanced and spirited re-

personal claims had won the good opinion of many of the Commons, and among others, Burke, who invited him to breakfast to meet a Leipsic professor. The conversation fell on the state of Germany, and Burke condemned the conduct of the *Illuminati* in Bohemia. Curwen having been to that country, thought his information might be acceptable, and have some weight in the discussion, but he was sadly mistaken. Burke burst out into a paroxysm of rage, and positively denied Curwen's facts. Curwen kept his temper, and adds, "I was not less astonished than hurt at this departure from good-breeding; but there was no alternative between a silent suppression of the indignity I received and a positive quarrel."

The society called *Illuminati* were a class of philosophers (established in 1782) in "the Fatherland," seeking the freedom of the understanding, and greater liberty of action to the individual man, regardless of ethics and spiritual insight. Lavater, Jung-Stilling, and Prince Charles of Hesse were corresponding members of the society. Kant, if not Hegel, got the credit with the orthodox for subduing the *Illuminati*—whether Rosicrucians, theosophists, or mystery-men need not be discussed here, as the society had no footing in England. Egalité Orleans introduced it into France, but French Jacobinism and the guillotine swept away all traces of it.

formers in the larger provincial towns of England—*ex. gr.*, James Losh of Newcastle—signed a declaration addressed to the people of Great Britain in favour of freedom of election and Parliamentary Reform. Mr. Curwen also joined the society of "the Friends of the People," but having found fault with their indiscreet advocacy of the worst form of French Jacobinism, had his name expunged from the books of the society, along with four other members of the House of Commons. Had Curwen's advice to these intractable men been followed, many of their body would have fared better than they did at the hands of the executive Government.

Mr. Curwen never allowed an opportunity to slip, when coercive measures were introduced by Pitt or his colleagues, of denouncing the arbitrary legislation and recklessness of his Majesty's counsellors. In November, 1795, when Pitt brought in a Bill for preventing what he called "seditious meetings," Curwen said of the Bill that "its direct and visible aim was to strip the subject of his most valuable privilege—that of speaking his mind on every matter relating to the public; therein consisted, in fact, the very essence, not only of English, but all real liberty." So resolutely was he determined to prefer the voice of the people to the voice of Ministers, that he did not scruple to avow himself ready to support it at the risk of his property and his life. It appeared to him immaterial whether the Constitution fell by insurrection or despotism. He imagined that when the inimical intentions the Bill displayed against public liberty were duly perceived, the people of England would not remain so heartless and supine as not to

resist it with the spirit and vigour of their ancestors. Nothing could well be bolder than this declaration; and, considering the period, it is surprising that Curwen escaped the attention of the Sergeant-at-Arms. He seems to have become a power in the House, and possibly his reputation for courage, as well as defiance of all mealy-mouthed sentiments during that political crisis, helped to save him. Three days later, Fox, Sheridan, and Curwen spoke on the same question, and to the same purpose.

On the 25th November, Mr. Curwen tested the feelings of the House by moving the postponement of the discussion on the two Seditions Bills. His speech on this occasion placed him in the first rank of the Opposition benches, not only as a debater, but as an uncompromising defender of public rights. The chronicler of the events of the day, writing as an historian, and not as a partisan, called Curwen's speech a memorable speech, both in argument, rhetoric, and force. Mr. Windham had been attacking Mr. Fox for his support of democracy, and Curwen took up the challenge on his friend's behalf, and carried war into the enemy's camp, neither asking nor giving quarter. He rebuked Mr. Windham for presuming that the many men of intrepidity with which Parliament and the nation abounded would tamely permit him and his associates to trample on their rights, and submit to become the passive instruments of their violation. Mr. Curwen lost his motion by 269 against 70 votes.

In 1796, Mr. Curwen objected to a secret and partial inquiry into the administration of the Bank of England; and during the last sessions of the century

always advocated the cause of the people, and opposed the direction of the Government where taxes and extravagance ruled. He spoke against the exorbitant supplies of money to the Prince Regent, and thereby incurred the displeasure of the Court.

Mr. Curwen belonged to that small section of Liberals in the House of Commons who, towards the close of the century, made so determined a stand against the Tory autocracy of that day, and contested every point in the Pitt programme of legislation; who sought to curb the obstinate Brunswicker on the throne, and to check his heaven-born Minister from his devil-ward tendencies to war, and wrong, and wrathfulness; who were brave when it was a towering fact in any man's character to be bold or brave at all; and who not only uttered sentiments condemnatory of the ruling powers, but, in doing so, ran the additional risk of being sent to the Tower or the scaffold. These Liberals earned among their countrymen proud and lasting distinction; they were named "the Old Minority" of the Commons. The "Old Minority" had a hard fight for political freedom, and some of the chief leaders, like Curwen, had a hard fight to escape impeachment when defending the liberties of the people; yet they sought nothing more than the privileges of the Constitution for which the Hampdens and the Eliots had sacrificed so much in the previous century.

The "Old Minority" won their laurels as men of high public virtues; and though they constituted but a small band of Reformers during those troublesome times from 1790 onwards, they were noble pioneers of a better time coming; and like an organic nucleus,

they expanded and grew in force—imbibing support from public opinion without, and indoctrinating the ruling powers within the walls of Paliament. Their achievements were great, and would have been vastly greater had there been a free press and an educated people in England.

It was a great feather in Curwen's cap, and to-day it is recorded as a great fact in his political history, that he stood among the most eminent of that distinguished band of patriots, the "Old Minority"—so high, indeed, as to be one of the chief lieutenants to the great Parliamentary leaders Fox and Sheridan.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Curwen on the popular Side—Defends the Rights of the Isle of Man. His Services acknowledged. His Bill against Bribery. His telling Speeches, homely Illustrations—Shows up Sir F. Burdett. His sensational Appearance in the Commons as a Cumberland Labourer, so clad and provisioned.

MR. CURWEN was frequently named on Committees, and on those of national import, and soon became a working member of the House; and on all questions touching the character of that assembly, or affecting its powers, he was thoroughly firm and uncompromising. After his return to Parliament in 1796, when the severity of the Carlisle contest and his signal triumph over the Lowthers had made his name so well known over England, his claims to senatorial honours were more fully recognized by the great parties in the State. Nor was his own bearing a whit behind his compeers: the halo of ancestry had a responsive halo in himself. His tall figure and vigorous step, his high resolve and energetic address, his straightforward purpose, combined with suavity of manner and high courtesy, were well calculated to impress a House representing some of the best blood of England. Had Curwen, with the powers he possessed, been born in the purple of Toryism—so long the exultant power in the country—he would have enjoyed a seat in the Cabinet, high place, honours, and emoluments. As a

member of the Whig Opposition he stood very high; indeed, his success as a debater required to be greatly above the ordinary level to be marked at all in an assembly which contained the best representative men of the Whig party not less of the period than of the reign of George the Third.

With the advent of the 19th century, and Pitt at the very zenith of his fame, Curwen was not slack in his endeavours for the popular cause, and was found siding with Fox and Grey on all the great questions of the day. Thus in February, 1805, he aided Mr. Grey on the amendment to the Address on the Spanish papers, and on the 8th April voted for Mr. Whitbread and a majority of the House in favour of a motion to censure the conduct of Lord Melville; and on the 10th of May defended the administration of Earl St. Vincent.

Mr. Curwen's bearing in the House of Commons, before the completion of his third Session, must have been of no common character to claim the good opinion of so great a magnate as Mr. Burke. On a previous page the reader would gather that Mr. Burke and Mr. Curwen lived on terms of intimacy previously to their unfortunate rupture on French affairs, when Burke's temper led him to cast aside two friends on one night;—Fox in the Commons, and Curwen in his drive home. The esteem of the veteran orator (Burke) for the newly-created commoner (Curwen), however originating, derived great strength from their being allied together in a Manx controversy; or rather in a parliamentary defence of Manx rights against an attempted usurpation of the Duke of Atholl. It seemed less needful to dwell on the part taken by

Mr. Curwen in 1790, as his appearance in 1805 on the same question was much more telling and expressive of his influence.

In 1780, and also in 1790, the Duke of Atholl prayed the House of Commons to grant him further compensation chargeable to the revenues of the Isle of Man, for the interests in that island ceded by his family to the Crown in 1765. This demand created great alarm in the Isle of Man, and the Governor, attended by his secretary and a deputation from the House of Keys, hastened to London early in April, 1790, to meet and, if possible, to thwart the Duke by asking the House of Commons to hold their Manx rights inviolate. They secured the aid of all the eminent members, excepting Pitt and Dundas. Burke seems to have been especially attentive to the Manx authorities, and said he would resist every tyrannical attempt against them. "He would do so from principle, from regard to them as fellow-subjects, and from a particular respect for their worthy friend Mr. Curwen, for whom," Mr. Burke further observed, "as indeed we must all agree, the island could never do enough."* It appears that Burke was as good as his word; for, says Mr. Callow, "such a drubbing upon the subject of sovereignties, crowns, sceptres, regalia, jewels, baubles, Highland pride, Scottish tyranny, tenants, vassals, slaves, &c., no man, I believe, ever received as the Duke got from Mr. Burke in the fullest House of Commons that has probably been assembled for a length of time."

* Extract from letter of Mr. D. Callow, secretary to the Governor of the Isle of Man, to his father William Callow, dated 29th April, 1790.

On the 26th March, 1805, the Duke again petitioned the Parliament, and a committee of the House reported in his favour. The House of Keys, the representatives of the Isle of Man, presented a counter-petition to his claims. Curwen being a Manx proprietor, and not less a true Manx-man in feeling, warmly defended the House of Keys against the decision of the Commons' Committee; and his speech, occupying fifty-five pages of small octavo, embraced a full history of the question at issue. No man in Parliament knew the subject half so well, or perhaps anything at all of it, except the law officers of the Crown bound to get up a smattering of the facts upon which to base a *nisi prius* speech. He presented papers belonging to his father of a very important character, as proving the co-legislation enjoyed by the House of Keys along with the manorial Lord and the Governor and Council. He spoke of the House of Keys as deriving its origin from the remotest periods of antiquity, and that it was perhaps the only Celtic institution remaining upon earth; and where the language of the records or indentures of the said Keys seemed ambiguous, he claimed allowance for defects of form to the barbarous times in which they were written, and the use of the Celtic dialect. He cited all the legal authorities on the subject through various reigns, such as Coke and Blackstone. In quoting the following from Locke's "Treatise on Government," as edited by Bishop Law—"If any one shall claim a power to lay and levy taxes on the people by his own authority, and without consent of the people, he hereby invades the fundamental law of property, and subverts the end of government"—he expressed his

veneration for the worthy prelate, and the pride he had in claiming him as a relative and collegiate counsellor. After showing the position of the House of Keys in the Courts of Tynwold, he entered fully into the revenues, and expenditure, the exports, and other financial and commercial considerations of the island.

One of the Duke's (Atholl) supporters not being able to base his views on the justice of the claims, had talked of generosity or liberality on the part of the Government, and this seems to have roused Curwen, who replied: "Sir, I am not ashamed to say that, as a member of Parliament, as one of the guardians of the public purse, I do not comprehend the term. The liberality of an individual out of that which is his own, I do understand, and know how to prize and honour; but how can I be liberal out of that which is not my own? How can the guardian display his fine feelings at the expense of his ward—the members of Parliament out of the pockets of their constituents? But, Sir, this act of liberality is attempted to be exercised, not out of the pockets of our constituents, but out of the pockets of those who have no representatives, who exclaim against it, who think it not liberality, but an act of profusion and injustice." He concluded this able, historical, and well-argued speech against the Duke of Atholl's claims by saying, "On the part of the people of the Isle of Man, I protest against its injustice. As a member of Parliament, I protest against such a waste of the public money."

As every Manx-man was deeply interested in the question before Parliament, Curwen's speech was read in its corrected form with intense interest in every house-

hold of the island; and the Celtic blood in its exuberant warmth knew no bounds to its praise of Curwen—the true son of Mona, of which he might have been lord and king if the voices of Manx-men had been the only sanction required to elevate him to the dignity. They proved their high estimation of his character by presenting him with a fine silver vase, about two feet in height, on a large salver, costing above 200 guineas, and inscribed as follows: "To John Christian Curwen, Esq., M.P., Member of the House of Keys, and President of the Agricultural Society of the Isle of Man: in grateful acknowledgement of his strenuous and successful efforts in Parliament in defence of their country's rights and independence, and of the benefits which their rising agriculture has received from his protection and his example: this tribute of their respect is presented by the natives of the Isle of Man. 1808."

In May, 1809, Curwen gave notice of a Bill for better securing the independence and purity of Parliament by preventing the procuring or obtaining seats in Parliament by corrupt practices; and likewise more effectually to prevent bribery. On the 4th and 26th of this month, and also on the 12th June, he spoke on the Bill. He alluded to the feeling out of doors, the distrust of public men, and the sad corrupting influences at work; that in proposing the Bill he had no wish to cast down the building of the Constitution, but to examine and repair it, lest the whole fabric became involved. He cited the words of a bold petitioner of the House who had told them "that their seats were bought and sold like stalls in Smithfield," and then narrated the

story of a lady in the North of England, who seems to have had two seats in a borough, and very much at her own disposal, being offered first ten and then twelve thousand guineas by a person and stranger to her calling himself Reding or Reddish (no doubt a pious lawyer who had been considered a *safe man* by the W. B.'s of that period), and of her dismissing him with indignation, saying, "Never have I disgraced myself with such practices; it is now too late in life for me to begin them." He might have had before his mind the oft-quoted case of the Countess in Westmoreland who said to such an application as the one mentioned above, "No! your man shan't stand," with an additional emphasis not uncommon with ladies as well as sea captains in the last century.

Though Mr. Curwen was a borough representative, he had the agricultural interests strongly at heart,—not influenced, however, by any purely selfish motive as the belief that the wealth of the country rested materially upon its land; and this led him to form high expectations from an increase of county members in Parliament in promoting general peace, domestic improvements, and the happiness of the people. He advocated direct taxation, and in this advocacy conveyed a wholesome and valuable truth to the House of Commons in the following piece of advice to its Ministerial members: "Do not summon a whole county to know who keeps a dog, or whether the petty farmer who curries his own horse and plants his own cabbages is to be surcharged with a groom or a gardener. Take what is wanted directly from us. A less sum will then be requisite, and you may dismiss from the public service a legion of tax-gatherers,

inspectors, assessors, and excisemen. You may then repeal all such revenue laws as are pernicious and oppressive—for instance, that affecting salt." He spoke strongly against the "wasteful profusion of the public money in pensions, reversions, jointures, and other such jobs of infamy;" and in allusion to the pensions distributed amongst the relations of the most elevated and opulent of our nobles, he made an admirable hit by saying, "To aid the brilliant illuminations of their mansions (the nobles), the farthing candle of the industrious indigent cottager must be sooner extinguished." Mr. Curwen used a very homely, yet all the more apposite, example of the galling effects of taxation when he pictured the denizen of the humblest cottage driven by "hard times" to spare his solitary *farthing dip*, to enrich the minions of the Court, so that they might burn their thousand wax-lights, and revel in luxury. There are many points of analogy both in the character and career of Mr. Curwen and Sir James Graham, his successor in the representation of Cumberland, which will be further illustrated in the life of the Netherby baronet, in another volume; here it may be well to note that Curwen's arguments against pensions, places, and jobbery were anticipatory of the famous speech made by Sir James Graham, twenty years later—the speech remembered for the allusion to the birds of prey.

Mr. Curwen's speech on the second reading (26th May) was marked by great terseness and force, with frequent citations of the opinions held out of doors on the sale of seats and other briberies. An honourable Member during the debate had quoted

Paley's opinion in favour of the *status quo*, and this called forth an able defence of that eminent divine—Curwen quoting Paley's words in support of his own views. Many of Curwen's statements read as if they were delivered last session (1866) by some reforming Whig of to-day, who would be glad of reform bit by bit rather than lose every chance of progress by calling for those sweeping changes which no constitutional Government of our times would be disposed in haste to grant. He was bold in his denunciation of corruption in every department of the State, and speaking of the little weight attached to oaths by some of the previous speakers, he threatened, if all sense of moral duty was to be effaced from persons likely to be returned as members of the House, to desist from any further attempts at reform, to relinquish his deep concern for public affairs, and retire to his farm, there to await the awful crisis, which could not be far distant. Mr. Curwen was not a prophet in this matter, as the state of affairs in 1809 with reference to bribery and oaths-taking has had its parallel so late as 1865; yet Lancaster and Totnes live as boroughs, and the citizens of these foul-nested constituencies may possibly be again addressed as "worthy and independent electors."

Sir F. Burdett having opposed the Bill, Curwen towards the conclusion of his speech said: "I know, Sir, there are many loud in their calls for Reform that dread nothing so much as this House making a temperate commencement towards it. * * * Reform is a word in which there is much magic. Every one applies it as a remedy to all the evils he sees in the

Government and Constitution." The chief speaker against Curwen's Bill was the Right Honourable William Wyndham, who, in an able speech occupying two hours in delivery, adopted the *tu quoque* argument, and attributed the largest share of jobbery to the people themselves, who were continually seeking emolument and place at the hands of the candidates asking for their suffrages. Curwen's Bill, like many of a similar character introduced since his time, received no favour in a House the majority of whose members were a living protest against an honest elective franchise, as they were to an honest representation of the people's interests.

The writer is not sure as to the occasion of Curwen's sensational appearance in the House—dressed like a Cumberland labourer, carrying a loaf and a cheese under his arms, but is inclined to suppose that it must have been on the night when he so strongly condemned pensions and sinecures, and spoke of the cottager being robbed of his farthing candle by an over-taxation that was wasted on Ministerial favourites and Courtly parasites. Curwen in a country suit of "hodden grey," and clanking along the floor of the House in a pair of Cumberland clogs (shoes with wooden soles rimmed with iron), with a "brown gwordie,"* and a "whillimer cheese," must have been a sight fit for the gods, and could only

* "Brown Gwordie" is a local name applied to a leavened loaf of barley and rye baked on the floor of an oven. "Whillimer cheese" is made of skimmed milk; and both used to form the staple food for farm labourers, with milk, bacon, and vegetables. The "gully" was a huge knife, the handling of which by some of the rustics used to be a display of power and skill which, if Curwen imitated, must have brought down "the roars of the House."

have been excelled by his carrying "the gully" knife, and using it upon the strong victuals,—the cutting of the black crust of the loaf producing in its splintered cleavage a noise resembling the crushing of cinders, and each incision through the dense texture of the cheese causing a squeaking, flinty sound like the joiner's plane on a deal board. If it be as represented to the writer, Curwen offered for the consideration of the Parliament, and, no doubt, in the hope of rousing it by a new sensation, the hard materials upon which north-country labourers had to feed—mainly owing to the heavy burdens they had to bear—as the strongest possible facts he could adduce in favour of lowering taxes. The tough facts of "Gwordie" and his spouse the cheese, afforded the basis for a clinching argument, not only to the Commons but to the stomach of the Commons; for who among the people's representatives had the grinders of the New Zealander and the powerful digestion of a Cumberland ploughman! Curwen holding up these specimens of food to illustrate what over-taxation had driven the Cumberland ploughman to live upon, should have had a grand effect; but the insensibility of the House to the people's wants was very much like the callosity and crust of the worst of "whillimers."

Enough has been written to show Curwen's Parliamentary position for some years at least, and the reader may be spared long quotations as further evidence of his unwearied zeal in favour of peace, reduced taxation, and other measures for the public good, and the prosperity of the agricultural and working classes of England. Though strongly political,

and truly a man of Parliamentary mark during an epoch of Parliamentary greatness such as the world has rarely witnessed, Mr. Curwen was not less noted as an agriculturist, and probably as advantageously engaged in that direction as in opposing Pitt and Wyndham. At this stage of his history it may be advisable to set forth his character as a farmer—not merely of a landowner playing at farming with a dilettanteism that clothes itself in kid gloves and foppery, but as a plodding student of the theory and practice, and true economical relations of agriculture.

CHAPTER VI.

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Agriculture in Cumberland before Curwen's Day. Old Systems bad to shake off. Curwen's Efforts to learn and to teach the Art. Workington Agricultural Society. Curwen on his Windermere Island.

MR. CURWEN was a son of the soil by birth and inheritance, and on his second marriage became a great landed proprietor; but he was not educated to the soil—not so much a farmer by nurture, as by adoption. He had reached the prime of life, had become a member of Parliament, and paid lengthy visits to the Continent before he meditated farming at all, and probably the dearness of corn—an important item in his colliery accounts, for he was the largest or second largest coal miner in Cumberland—had more to do with his initiative in the art than the absorbing interests of the war, which affected British husbandry and British interests generally. When once fairly bent to the work, he followed it with a zest and vigour that never flagged for thirty years, earning thereby a name second to none in agriculture in Britain, and becoming a great benefactor to his own county as well as the country at large.

Cumberland was not a district for the study of farming operations at the dawn of the century. Truly or not in the record, it has been repeatedly stated

that Cumberland and Westmoreland were the last counties in England to receive improvements in husbandry. The mountainous nature of the district, the extensive commons, the large tracts of cold and barren highlands, the distance from markets or commercial centres, and altogether a region but little frequented by men of enterprise, lent strength to the notion that Cumberland was behind the age; and that its greatest aim and success would be to feed and clothe itself, and keep its poor herds of stock alive over winter. As the further the circumference from the radiating point, the less marked are the wavy outlines on the pool's surface, so the further the distance from the centres of commerce, the less the impetus to industrial pursuits—the less encouragement to human exertions. Land carriage from Cumberland to any great manufacturing town was 100 miles at least, over roads little better than traversed ruts. A few sheep and the poorer sorts of Irish and Scotch beasts grazed on the higher lands, but thousands of acres were lying almost in waste till nearly the close of the 18th century. The dales and meadows showed their greensward, milch cows, and young stock; and better lands were tilled in a way for oats, barley, and rye—wheat being a rarer crop. Vegetables were getting more into use as "blood fresheners," and for the first time a small lot of turnips had been sown in a field by Mr. P. Howard, of Corby Castle, in 1756—the year that Curwen was born. So Curwen and field-turnips came in the same year, and no man has been born to Cumberland during the 110 years that have elapsed who has shown more praiseworthy efforts for turnip cultivation. Draining even of an

imperfect kind had hardly been heard of. Fallows abounded, but direct weeding was rare. Husbandry implements were of the rudest, and everything about the farm in accordance with a primitive contentment that remained satisfied with plain food and poor culture, imperfect shelter for house and cattle, and rough fodder for winter stores. Half-fed beeves were killed, and salted for winter's consumption; and braxied mutton more than sufficed to feed the fell-siders. Plantations with acorns, beech-nuts, and "roughness" served to rear a poor sort of pork—the "boar's head" being a special getting up for a manorial display. The land as it was cultivated could do no more, and then it was thought to have reached its "full tether of yield."

English farming was far short of Holland, and the hindrance to improved agriculture was less owing to conflicting national interests than a bigoted adherence to "our grandfathers'" plans. As an example, when the winnowing machine was first introduced into East Lothian (Scotland) the country folk looked with suspicion on the grain cleaned by "artificially created wind," and the clergy—yclept the Gospel Ministers—glibly talked of the ways of the Israelites for thrashing out the corn; that winds were raised by God alone; and that it was irreligious in a man to raise wind for himself! One of these wise teachers refused the sacrament to those of his parishioners who thus "irreverently raised the devil's wind." * The old jog-trot methods

* What a blessed thing it would have been to have obtained any wind—human, saints', or devils'—to drive off the Calvinistic chaff of these parsons, so as to leave a little of the wholesome corn of Christian charity with which to feed their gaping, trustful flocks. The reader of

prevailed, and there was no system of husbandry worthy of the name; it was happy-go-lucky, and "deil tak the hindmost," and the line of the old song,

New-fangled doings were hateful to luik at,

pretty fairly represented the general agricultural sentiment. The farmer trusted to "canny weather" for the crops, and to a grey coat of his wife's spinning for wear and protection; to crowdies and milk, "whillimer cheese," and coarse bread, with now and then a piece of beef or salted bacon. There was plenty of industry and hard work, but the power to deviate from beaten paths, to create or design improvements, or to meet emergencies, was almost unknown. Commercial ideas had no existence in the farmer's mind. He had a regular day at market, however prices stood, and everything else was regulated on the same routine system. Curwen saw this deplorable state of things, and longed to alter it. He first began at home, and soon found that whatever he suggested on the principles of common sense or on theoretical grounds was met with objections on the part of his bailiff and his assistants. The study of husbandry in books would have been viewed as insane, only that there were so few books worth naming beyond William Blith, Jethro Tull, Arthur Young, and their copyists. In 1782 the Government had established a Board of Agriculture, and in 1795

Sir Walter Scott's "Old Mortality" will recall Mause Headrigg's remonstrating with the Lady of Tillietudlem for sending her son to work in the barn with "a new-fangled machine for dighting the corn frae the chaff; thus impiously thwarting the will of Divine Providence by raising wind for your leddyship's ain particular use by human art," &c.

the Earl of Dundonald issued a work on the connection between agriculture and chemistry; and the subject received further illustration at the hands of Sir H. Davy, who published his famous work in 1802.

Mr. Curwen visited Edinburgh and the best cultivated districts of Scotland; saw Lord Kames, Sir John Sinclair, the Earl of Dundonald—all great authorities in agricultural matters; he also talked much with his colleagues in Parliament, and explored special districts in England; in short, spared no expense in trying to learn and benefit from the observations and experience of others. He read a great deal, indeed everything that he could lay his hands upon likely to clear up or elucidate the general subject of agriculture; he listened patiently to the suggestions of others, whether dull or dogmatic, theoretical or practical observers: he also thought much for himself, on the smaller as well as the greater matters of the farm. Like the chemist in his pursuit of a new agent, Curwen was full of ardour and hope as to the result of his investigations; and it may be observed that, without the slightest pretension to science himself, he looked to chemistry for help, indeed, great help to agriculture. Having travelled far and wide, and seen the best farming in Great Britain, also parts of the Continent, and made himself the correspondent and friend of nearly every man of note, he fancied that the information he had obtained, and which he was applying to the cultivation of his own farms, should be made available to others, and that the experiences of the many would tend to more good than the isolated efforts of the

few. These considerations led him to attempt the formation of an Agricultural Society at Workington. It was the first effort of the kind in Cumberland or Westmoreland,* and probably the first of any real worth in the six northern counties. His first invitation was made to his neighbours to form the nucleus of the society, then to the more enterprising farmers of a larger radius from Workington, till it embraced both counties and part of North Lancashire; and such was the response to his call that in three or four years after its first establishment the society became the largest provincial meeting of farmers in England. No greater proof need be cited of Curwen's popularity and wide influence in the north of England than this gathering of the yeomen and tenant-farmers of all shades of politics under his agricultural flag. This new experiment, and it proved eminently successful, was meant to create an interest in the soil beyond what had hitherto existed, to collect the varied opinions of the farming class, and to concentrate them, so to speak, into one focus—that focus being further illumined by the energetic mind of the founder of the society, Curwen himself.

About the time that he assumed the name of Curwen (1790) he purchased the largest of the islands on Windermere Lake, now known as "Curwen's Isle." It may be stated in passing that he was the first to establish regattas upon the lake, and the first to try an iron keel to a boat, which boat proved the fastest in the race in 1813. He spent part of each summer on Windermere, and willingly joined in

* A small society of farmers was founded in Kendal in 1799.

everything calculated to enliven "the Lakers"—resident or otherwise—by boating, wrestling, and amusements, and distributing, as was his wont, a bountiful hospitality to all comers. His farming hobbies were not lost sight of, and his "sheep-shearings" at Winterslack attracted hosts of people. His popularity became great among the dalesmen, because he could talk to them on farming matters and breeds of sheep, not only like one of themselves, but apparently with higher knowledge and as if derived from experience; besides, his homely manners and gift of talk won upon them. In 1807 eighty gentlemen dined with Curwen, and large parties of country folk likewise partook of his hospitality. From this meeting a letter of congratulation was sent to the Bishop of Llandaff on his receiving a gold medal from the Board of Agriculture for a treatise on "Planting and the Growth of Forest Trees."

Mr. Curwen was known as an experimental farmer from the dawn of the century, as well as being a sincere friend of the farmers, and one of the most strenuous supporters of their interests in Parliament. Moreover, his home influence, his frankness, and fine hospitality acted like a magnetic force in drawing around him friends, political supporters, and even political opponents—always excepting some of the servile Lowtherites about Whitehaven;—so that he could, and did, accomplish a larger amount of practical good in agriculture than any other man in Cumberland before or since his time; and this was to be attributed, not to the extent of his acreage or landlord influence, but to his personal character and thoroughness of action in all his undertakings. The

agricultural machine had long been in the position of a slow coach, and even now, though its speed is greatly better, it cannot be considered fast. The "stuff" or materials of its construction being of native growth, were sound enough at heart, and made to last; but the spokes and rims of one generation may not suit its immediate successor; in short, the machine wanted lightness and springiness, just as its team wanted less of the draught and more of the blood character to give it what is aptly termed—go. It was the want of *go* in the farmer's mind that permitted bad work to remain bad, and old systems to remain in force when the rest of the world were looking to macadamization and modern improvements as essential to the world's progress.

CHAPTER VII.

Workington Agricultural Society—its Branch in the Isle of Man. Characters of Curwen's Show—the Representative Men assembled—the special and general Relations of the Show—the President's Address.

THE first meeting of the Workington Agricultural Society appears to have been held on October 25, 1805, when the rules were formed and Mr. Curwen elected President. The competition for prizes was open to the whole of Cumberland, and to annual subscribers in every county. The meeting generally occupied two days: on the first day, the show of cattle, implements, &c., took place at the Schoose (Mr. Curwen's farm), close to Workington Hall, and the people were there fed in tents—460 dining in this fashion at the first meeting! On the second day, the President's report was read in the Assembly Rooms at Workington, and the prizes were distributed. After the more exact business of the day was over, Mr. Curwen entertained the Society to dinner, where good talk helped to digest good pudding, and men were made happy under the presiding genius of "mine host" and his able coadjutors, who could say the right thing at the right time, who knew their duties, and could discharge them as men with a vocation and an utterance. In the evening, Mrs. Curwen had an assembly or ball,

where the ladies had the opportunity of gracefully playing their part, and giving life and zest to the last hours of the Society's proceedings.

The members of the Society included all classes and both sexes; indeed, such was the spirit manifested by lady-proprietors, as well as farmers' wives, that they carried off prizes for well-managed farms and stock, as well as for their special privilege, dairy produce. Not only were all the characteristics of the modern agricultural society to be found at Workington, but a great deal more; and though sixty years have elapsed since the rules were formed by Curwen, the societies of the present day might with advantage borrow a leaf, or many leaves, from his book. As the reclamation of wastes and the drainage of land were then—and even now, in fact—most desirable, Curwen suggested that prizes should be given to encourage every extension that could be achieved, or additional amount of area of land obtained, and for improvements in that area when extended. Thus the enclosure of commons in Cumberland and Westmoreland received a great impetus at the hands of Curwen and his society; and proofs of the immense advantages accruing from this encouragement may be judged of by the fact—furnished the author by one (now living) who knew the state of things that prevailed from personal experience—that the equestrian, at the beginning of this century, could ride from Cockermouth to Carlisle, and on to Penrith and Keswick, and so back to Cockermouth, nearly all the way on common land. Curwen set a great example in this matter of enclosure and draining, and fostered it in others by writing letters, by prizes, and direct personal

example. If he had done nothing more than this in the way of agricultural improvement, he stood before his countrymen as a true benefactor worthy of commemoration for not only making two blades of grass grow where only *one* grew before, but for hundreds of blades where *none* had grown, nor were likely to grow for a long time to come. An old friend who traversed the county in various directions upwards of sixty years ago, and knew its backwardness in agriculture before the establishment of the Workington Society, and now sees the extensive wastes of his own boyish period growing fine corn and green crops—owing almost entirely to Curwen's efforts—has often said, "For these great improvements, so beneficial to the modern farmer and to every class of the community, Curwen's name should never be forgotten by us folk in Cumberland."

Along with the ordinary prizes for stock, &c., tree planting received a due share of favour; nor were ploughmen, industrious cottagers, and faithful servants overlooked in the distribution of awards. The character of the Society was both special and general—its promoters, or, it may be said, Curwen himself, as head and front of all, being actuated by no narrow or confined views, but making "Individual benefit and Public prosperity" their motives for action and direction. The meritorious endeavours of the most humble obtained a wide publicity through the annual reports published by Curwen; and while the example of an enterprising farmer influenced a whole neighbourhood, the "blue ribbon" and money token for skill, for honesty, or obligingness on the part of the labourer, became the fireside talk of the whole district.

Curwen brought his enthusiasm to bear upon everything connected with the Society—sparing neither time nor expense to render the undertaking a visible fact to the northern counties, and not less visibly a great success. He had reason to congratulate the members of the Society on their spirit and zeal, and no doubt felt proud to say, at one of the early meetings, that "so numerous and thoroughly respectable a body of practical agriculturists is not to be found in any local society in the kingdom." These meetings, at first attractive by their novelty, soon created a spirit of emulation and a feeling of brotherhood amongst the farming gentry. They could meet at Workington Hall to exchange friendly intercourse, to compare notes, and to mark the progress of the art as described by their President from year to year. The yeomen and farmers were equally interested, and, if possible, still more benefited; for nowhere and at no time in Cumberland—not even now, in the year of grace 1867, could they see such *bona fide* agricultural shows as Curwen obtained for them at the Schoose farm. Live-stock, the latest mechanical inventions, and corn and dairy produce of all kinds were to be seen. Every novelty in the art, and every new production of the soil that could be had in George the Third's dominions, were obtained by Curwen; and though his shows were professedly for Cumberland and Westmoreland, every agricultural county in Great Britain was represented in some form or other by animals, new machines, or produce. The Suffolk nag, the West Highland beast, the Essex wheats, and the Lothian plough are cited at random to prove the variety as

well as the generality of the show. Every type of animal had its representative at the Schoose, and every agricultural implement of merit was tested there; whilst all the corn tribe, grasses, vegetables, seeds, and fruits were made available for inspection. Even France and America were put in requisition to furnish examples of corn, so that the most available materials for English growth and culture, as well as the complete study of the art of farming in all its varied phases, were made accessible to the members of the Workington Agricultural Society.

A branch society from the Workington was formed in the Isle of Man, and also flourished under Mr. Curwen's presidency. The first meeting of subscribers to the "Manx Agricultural Institution," as it was named, was held at St. John's, in the said island, on the 27th November, 1806. The Hon. Lieut.-Governor Smelt, the Lord Bishop of Sodor and Man, the Hon. Deemsters, Lace, and Crellin, and two of the Taubman family were Vice-Presidents. The institution embraced the leading men and best farmers of the island; and its influence—great in developing the agricultural resources of the country and promoting its commercial prosperity—was felt long after the passing away of its founder. Even as late as 1846-7, when the potato disease prevailed, the writer of these pages perused letters from the Isle of Man in which Curwen's forethought and sagacious opinions, set forth thirty years previously, were quoted as exemplifying current events; and as further proving the careful attention paid by him to vegetable growth and culture.

WORKINGTON AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

Workington presented a gay sight, as well as grand doings, during the two days of the Agricultural Meeting—beginning from the morning of the show, when the first bit of bunting was run up by sailor boys in the harbour, to the midnight hours sounding "merrie in the hall" of a second day; or, more correctly perhaps, the grey streak that heralded the morn of the third, when Mrs. Curwen's ball guests bid their last adieu to the "mistress of the ceremonies." Workington of all Cumberland towns shone the most in Curwen's time in combining practical every-day callings with the pleasantest "assemblies" and socialities. The towns-folk were proud of their position, and prouder still of Curwen; so that every Workingtonian felt it his duty to add to the pleasures of the Agricultural Meeting, from the humblest housewife washing her doorstep for good appearance sake, to the shipowner and gentleman offering bed and board to visitors—friends or strangers. "The Hall" had its hundred guests, and every inn and private house was engaged to secure accommodation for man and horse. Welcome was the order of the day to all comers, and right welcome all! The vessels were gaily decked out, every flagstaff in the town had its pendant or "union jack," and gay streamers floated in the October breeze from windows, turrets, and Hall; so that the long irregular streets lost their grey and dingy character in the handsome decoration and holiday demonstration.

The influx of strangers was great, and from all quarters of the county, in addition to those who had travelled hundreds of miles and become the guests of the Curwens. The bridge leading to the town was

thronged with yeomanry and farmers, mounted and on foot; husbandmen and artisans; now and then a carriage of the squirearchy, their wives and daughters; and a larger display of country women palfreyed, bravely escorted, and all smiles over. The show itself could never be forgotten. Dukes, earls, lords, and ladies mingled with the crowd of spectators; equality and fraternity were the order of the day, and decorum and friendly feeling guided all the proceedings. Ladies had devoted gallants by their side; rural matrons and "the lassies" their ain kind of folk; while hearty and happy recognition of lairds, fellside folk, and dalesmen were heard everywhere. There was novelty each year as to the character of the people assembled, as well as of the show itself; and no lack of admiration of both the humanities and the stock exhibited.

It was a fine sight to see the great houses of the Howards and the Russells so ably represented at the Schoose farm, the Dukes of Norfolk and Bedford tracing the progress of agriculture, and noting their high approval of the services of a north-country commoner,—the hearty Coke of Holkham joking with the learned Bishop of Llandaff,—the Deemster of Mona interrogating the exalted Sir John Sinclair of Edinburgh, whose stature exceeded the tallest Cumbrians, and these were not a few, amongst whom the fine handsome bearing of the young Netherby baronet was not the least conspicuous and grand. Then of the landed gentry and liberal Churchmen, the worthy Howard of Corby Castle, the Revs. R. Matthews and Stanley were there; whilst the yeomanry had William Blamire, who, like his uncle

Curwen, was radiant in graciousness; backed by Joseph Saul, the scholar of Green Row, the loud and hearty Sammy Rigg of the Abbey Holme, the exploring minded Rooke of Akehead, and others less known to fame, but of high esteem in their respective districts. These names are cited as attached to representative men, and as there were nearly a thousand subscribers to the Society, the reader can fill up the picture by fancying that the best yeomen and farmers of the north were present, and many accompanied by their women folk "in best bib and tucker"—constituting a demonstration as rare as it was grand. Nothing has been seen like it in Cumberland, excepting the Royal Agricultural Society's meeting a few years ago in Carlisle, and that cannot fairly be adduced in comparison, seeing that it is a national undertaking; whereas the Workington society owed its development to one man—Curwen, whose personal character, grandly towering over all in enthusiasm, drew to himself, as master-minds alone can do, the intellectual vigour and spirit of some of the best blood of England, and assuredly the best representatives of the landed interest of the northern counties of England and the southern of Scotland.

If the show was unrivalled in character and extent in Britain, and for a long time had no competitor, the President's address on the second day of the meeting was as original in conception as it was in the treatment of the various subjects which it embraced. Curwen gave a faithful *résumé* of the past year of agriculture, entering fully into the general questions pertaining to the art, and not seldom dwelling upon details that might interest the Society in particular

directions of inquiry. He commended honest endeavour, and trials of ingenuity; he was not the less ready to solicit the suggestions and criticism of others—thus trying to promote self-dependence amongst the farmers, and to encourage thoughtful consideration for their own and the national interests. His words were to the purpose—clear and perspicuous, and his aim the realization of the best husbandry. He could condemn bad farming with as much graciousness as he could uphold the good. There was no want of eulogy, yet no personal feeling or partiality exhibited in his review of agriculture; but an honest avowal of his sentiments and belief, couched in language that could offend no one. His judgment might and did err, but no man could find fault with Curwen, in whom everybody could trace feelings actuated by a noble purpose and good intent, and whose heart was in the right place, and never more so than when surrounded by the yeomanry of Cumberland. He used to give an account of his wanderings in the district during the past year, and seemed to know every farm of any pretensions—noting what was exceptionable, or where he found a heartier response to the new views of husbandry, stocking, and cultivation. The address each year was like another chapter of the book with a fresh heading and fresh matter; moreover, it was a book of itself, containing a general review of British agriculture along with that of his favourite locality. His language was homely and expressive, and his audience as patient as if listening to a discourse; but Curwen's discourse never had the soporific effects [illegible] class, and it was often termed "[illegible] lot of

good talk with real pith in it." This annual address was an original notion of Curwen's own, and it does not seem to have been taken up by anybody else to the same extent or with the same significance; but if the show was good, practical, and instructive, the address—and there were no two opinions on the matter—might be looked upon as the crowning capital of the whole, giving definite proportions and character to the temple of agriculture which Curwen laboured so earnestly to erect for the men of Cumberland.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Workington Show—attracts Dukes of Norfolk and Bedford, Mr. Coke, and other Notabilities. Curwen spares no Expense—his high-priced Cattle—Shorthorns—competes with Sir John Sinclair—tries Bone and other Fertilizers.

THE favour in which the Workington Agricultural Society was held in the northern counties is, or should be, well known to everybody connected with the farming interests of Cumberland, as some are yet to the fore who attended the Society's meetings; and vast numbers of the present generation have heard their sires speak of the "grand shows" at the Schoose, and "old Curwen at the head of all." The interest of the Society was far from being confined to the district between the rivers Lune and Sark, Lancaster and Gretna, or the widely spread country from the Solway-based Black Coomb to the long range of vales under the shadow of Crossfell; but found response throughout the length and breadth of the island, and attracted the attention of every man of agricultural note in the three kingdoms. The Dukes of Norfolk and Bedford, Mr. Coke (afterwards Earl of Leicester), Lord Thanet, the Bishop of Llandaff, and others of high position came from the South; Sir John Sinclair, the men of the Lothians and of the Carse of Gowrie, from the North; at a time when travelling was by

slow stages and attended with great expense; Manxmen, and even Irish proprietors, made for the port of Workington by collier schooners or otherwise; and the "better lairds" of Galloway annually freighted the bonny smack "Rose" for the same port—caring little for the treacherous delays and discomforts attending the passage across the Solway and Irish Sea, knowing as they did the highly hospitable welcome awaiting them on landing at the mouth of the Derwent.

During the first decades of this century, the Duke of Bedford, Mr. Coke of Norfolk, and Mr. Curwen were the three great men of the time in seeking to advance the prosperity of the landed interests of England by the establishment of agricultural shows. Each of these landowners in his own sphere achieved very much that was highly praiseworthy—more than posterity has had gratitude to remember; and it was uphill work with all of them, seeking to uproot old prejudices, and to indoctrinate the bucolic mind with new ideas and new modes of management. Mr. Curwen was the greatest experimentalist of the three, and spent the most money; while there is good ground for believing that he benefited himself the least. The Duke of Bedford had large estates in North Devon, and many of his farms were like the small holdings of the Irish—the dwellers thereon partaking of the Celtic habits, if not the possessors of Celtic blood—which he longed to make something better by throwing several into one great holding at Tavistock. The Duke's visits to Workington Hall made him partial to Mr. Curwen's farming, and quite as partial to Cumberland folk: so he asked Mr.

Curwen to recommend a good man for his new experiment—a model farm of large size, conducted on large capital and with large enterprise. This was done, and the Duke having got a Cumberland farmer of the Curwen class, went still further, and arranged for Cumberland ploughmen and everything pertaining to the husbandry of the county. Amongst the many cargoes shipped from Workington, none so much resembled on a small scale "the Pilgrim Fathers'" emigration to America as the Bedford freight of men, women, cattle, poultry, carts, corn seed, farming implements, and other *et ceteras*—almost a modern Noah's ark.

Mr. Coke, better known as "Coke of Norfolk," was a very intimate friend of Mr. Curwen's. The two men were much alike in jolly good feeling, politicians of the same school, patriotic in the same cause, and thoroughly hearty gallants of the old-fashioned gay world. No man could possibly improve a property more than Mr. Coke effected in his at Holkham; and, like Mr. Curwen, tried to improve his neighbours by annual shows. In 1776, when Mr. Coke took possession of his property, his rental was little more than £2,000. In 1818 the revenue of his 1,500 acres of plantation realized £2,700, and the whole estate £20,000 more; and this improvement was in part owing to his adoption of Mr. Curwen's system of cropping, turnip-cultivation, sheep-feeding, the irrigation of meadows, and other modes which tended to make the sandy soils of Norfolk fertile. He refrained from Mr. Curwen's costly stock experiments, but did great things for his estate by example as a farmer, by granting long leases, erecting cottages, and

giving good wages, so that after a time the workhouse became obsolete; yet with all these marvellous improvements to both property and people, he, in common with all who march in advance of the times, was denounced and opposed at the county election of Norfolk on the ground that his system "would lessen the demand for labour, deprive the poor of employment and the means of subsistence, and demoralize the population of the country"!

It has been stated that Mr. Coke accompanied Mr. Curwen to the Speaker's chair on his taking his seat in the House of Commons, and it is not improbable that Mr. Curwen had the largest share in startling "the House" from its senatorial propriety on an occasion memorable to Holkham. Mr. Coke, though an "old bachelor," was wishful to see his nephew marry a very pretty girl, or, if you will, a lady of high personal attractions; but as the nephew was slow "to buckle to," Mr. Coke got impatient, and married the lady—the daughter of Earl Albemarle—himself. Lady Mary's first accouchement of a son and heir was announced to him in the House of Commons; and the fact becoming known, such was his popularity, that the House rose and gave three cheers for "Lady Mary's and the boy's luck"!

The Duke of Norfolk, when Earl of Surrey, had been a colleague of Mr. Curwen's in the representation of Carlisle—hearty friends then, and so they continued throughout their lives, exchanging the courtesies of the social world, and remaining firm adherents of the advanced Whig party. The Duke attended the Workington shows occasionally, and rejoiced as much as any one to see the fine gathering

of men and women, and to partake of the hearty pleasantry that prevailed at the Hall; and whoever might be the *alpha*, it is fair to presume that his Grace would be the *omega* of the feast.

Whilst men of high title and distinction came from all parts of the kingdom to witness Mr. Curwen's operations on the Schoose farm, and to benefit by his teachings and example, the person who had the largest estate adjacent to that of Workington was conspicuous by his absence from the Society's meetings; and this person was no less than the Lord Lieutenant of the counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland from 1802 to 1844! He who should have been faithful to his position in the county, and to the principles of the party which he upheld in the State, and should have sought every opportunity of encouraging the landed interests, stood quite aloof.

The establishment of the Workington Agricultural Society, and its increasing operations from 1806 onwards, naturally entitled Mr. Curwen to the highest consideration of the agricultural public of Cumberland, and not less their esteem and lasting gratitude. To record what he did, and attempted to do, as an experimental farmer, single-handed, during the long years that his mind was devoted to farming, would be to fill an ordinary-sized volume, and such a volume could only embrace a slight epitome of his work. A glance, however, in two or three directions at his farmstead and land may help the reader to form an opinion of the theories he entertained on the subject of stock, and his readiness, and, it may be added, boldness, in introducing the most expensive of their kind; his trials of new implements, and some of his

own designing; his testing of every novelty that had a fair backing; and his varied cultivation of the soil.

At the outset, it may be said that he brought all kinds of stock into Cumberland, and from all parts of the kingdom; nay, more, for hardly content with Great Britain, he is said to have imported sheep from Spain, as he did more portable and less expensive produce from France and America.

The first Devonshire cattle he bought for the Schoose farm was a noted herd for which he paid a large sum, but they did no good. Some years later he tried a second lot, which fared better; and in the year 1816 these Devons were much prized. He was very partial to the fattening of stock, and in his time fatness was the great test with judges. Having this desideratum in view, he hesitated not, at any sacrifice, to obtain fattening and growth; and, as will be readily understood, the animals of the southern counties brought northwards to cold, often wet, and bleak ground, necessarily stood in greater need of nourishment to make them continue in health, and to show growth and weight. A more careful consideration of climatic influences and change of district might have saved Mr. Curwen from repeating such costly experiments; but England in his eyes was England all over, and his enthusiasm led him to fancy that "canny Cumberland" should be made to vie, if possible, with the sunny slopes of Devon or the fertile downs of Sussex.

If extravagant in the purchase of general stock, he appeared to be wilfully extravagant in the purchase of bulls, some of which cost him enormous sums. It is supposed that "fancy prices" belong to a later period than Mr. Curwen's heydays of farm-

ing; but this can hardly be the fact when he gave 1,000 guineas for one animal which happily turned out well. On another occasion he offered £1,400 for a bull, but was outbid by a Yorkshire firm. The animal died the day following. If his pocket escaped in this instance, one of his own bull-calves of great value had an equally narrow escape for its life. Mr. Curwen, who received, whilst in London, a weekly report from his bailiff, was apprized that this young animal had goaded one of the Schoose labourers, and in his reply on farming matters in general, added a postscript to his letter, which neither his bailiff nor his Workington friends could read; so the single line of postscript received was lost sight of. On Mr. Curwen's return from his parliamentary duties, his first visit was to his farm, and the first animal he saw was the said bull; when he immediately exclaimed, "Why have you that beast here? did not I order it to be killed?" The bailiff could not recall any such instructions, but as part of one of his master's letters was illegible, the explanation might be there. So it was, the short postscript, something like Arabic characters, was, "Shoot that d——d bull." Mr. Curwen's handwriting was not of the best; in this case it saved a life, and perhaps it is the only thing that could be said in favour of his caligraphy, or rather *spoon*-graphy, as he was in the habit of franking his letters with a salt-spoon, if hurried at breakfast; and, in all probability, did not confine the operation of so convenient a marker to the enveloping sheet of his correspondence. As an instance of the character of his stock, it is worthy of note that his old friend Mr. Benson, of St. Helens, Cockermouth, once offered him

£100 for a newly dropped heifer, which he refused. The fame of his breed of short-horns was not confined to his Majesty's dominions, as some of the best stock in Pennsylvania, United States, had their pedigree in "General," and "Assurance," and other well-known animals of his rearing; and inasmuch as the Pennsylvanian Society's transactions had high credit throughout the States, the management of stock in the far West may fairly be said to have been much influenced by the well-recorded experiments and results obtained by Mr. Curwen, at the Schoose farm. It was through Curwen's exertions that short-horns —now so highly valued—got a footing in Cumberland; so that to him, and him alone, is due the first introduction of the best stock in the county.

Before Curwen's time the only sheep seen near Workington belonged to the mountain sorts, and they showed poor wool, and brought small prices. All this was altered by his introduction of fresh breeds. It is said that he imported a flock of Merinoes, but the experiment was unfavourable. "The meat was good for nothing, and the wool not up to the mark." Crosses with these did better, and probably some of the blood, however small as a moiety, may still be found in some parts of Cumberland. He was rash in his sheep speculations, owing in part to his ignoring the influence of *habitat* upon the growth and health and general well-doing of imported breeds. It was long before he could vie with his Scottish contemporary, Sir John Sinclair, in sheep or wool; and though the rivalry was keen between these noted men, it was always pleasant. Like Mr. Curwen, Sir John was well quizzed at the

early part of his farming career, and as he was credited for making his geese into swans, jokes were the more readily perpetrated at his expense. Mr. Curwen liked Sir John exceedingly, and also liked a joke when he could get it. Thus at a meeting of leading agriculturists in London, Sir John produced a sample of wool, and, in his usual style, asked the president and members to examine it, and say if they had ever seen anything so good, of native growth. Whilst the sample was being handed round, Mr. Curwen secretly tore off a portion, and, as soon as Sir John had concluded his remarks, took the opportunity of saying that he fancied he had as good in his possession as Sir John had exhibited; and then produced the stolen sample. Sir John, astounded at the idea of any one having wool to compete with his, laid hold of Curwen's specimen, and held it up with his own larger lot, and in an exulting tone said, "Mr. Chairman, look at these samples; why, they are never for a moment to be compared with each other." To those in the secret the joke furnished large entertainment. Sir John's swans were not all geese, especially his domestic ones, as finer birds both in size and real worth were seldom met with; and in reference to them, he used to say that he had what no other man in Scotland could boast of—*forty-two feet* of daughters! Sir John had seven daughters, the majority of whom were above six feet in height. The house of the Sinclairs, where the best society of Edinburgh used to assemble, was named, in honour of the high stature of the family, "the Giant's Causeway."

Mr. Curwen expended large sums in the inclosure, fencing, and draining of poor land. He erected a

bone-mill for crushing bones, which was looked upon as a great curiosity at first, and of course classified with his other foolish whims and hobbies. How in this, as in other departments of knowledge, things are changed! To-day bone-manure is a great article of commerce, and every homestead that can afford "to boil the pot" with shins or ribs of beef, is waited upon by itinerant purchasers of rags, who find the bone trade the best of all their scrap gatherings. And not content with the collecting of bones from every available source within these realms, the Continent is solicited for aid to the turnip crops of the British farmer; nay, far beyond Europe—the deserts of Egypt, the barren passes of Syria, and poverty-stricken Palestine are scoured for the osseous skeletons of the camel and Arab steed, and shipped to England to be converted, sooner or later, into Essex wheat, Cheshire cheese, or Sussex bacon. In this, as in other directions, Mr. Curwen took the lead, and soon proved to the most sceptical the fertilizing value of crushed bones.

A new manure was manufactured in London of excreta and earth, so as to constitute a dry mass or powder; Mr. Curwen, always ready to adopt and test a new fertilizer, had a quantity of this metropolitan guano brought down to the Schoose; but so strongly did it affect the noses of the labourers that he could hardly get it sown. The crops raised by this "nasty stuff" astonished the farmer, and created as much talk as guano itself did thirty years later. It must have been of the potency of this manure that Mr. Curwen spoke when he told a body of farmers that a pinch of it, or what could be put in a waistcoat

pocket, would be sufficient to make a wheat crop successful; and which elicited from a blunt farmer, nothing loth to chaff "the squire," this remark, "Aye mebby sae, Mr. Curwen; but then yen might put yen's crop into t'other pocket."

Mr. Curwen tried all kinds of manure, the paring and burning of bad-surfaced land, lime and every plausible compost or agency that the theory of chemistry, or the reasoning of practical men, could suggest. He knew that agriculture could say little for itself, that it had been too long in the leading-strings of servile imitators of the past, and that past bigoted and slow; but years of experience, instead of educing light and improvement, only brought a larger amount of senility into the field; therefore, anything was more desirable than stagnation of thought. The labours of Sir H. Davy, and the advanced views of the Earl of Dundonald, who was both a practical chemist and practical farmer, were not lost upon Curwen. He saw that chemistry should be viewed as a helping hand to husbandry; and the resolution of the compound bodies of soda, potash, &c., into primitive elements, impressed him still more with the value of chemical agency in the breaking up, altering, and probably fertilizing of tillable lands. To-day all this is known, and the hosts of chemical manufactories (too many by half to be honest) for artificial manures bring the fact to everybody's fireside; but in Curwen's time the idea of chemistry doing anything for the farmer would have been viewed by the great mass of land cultivators as ridiculous as looking for a "Whillimer cheese" in a new moon.

Whilst the farming world in the North could not see the drift of some of his novelties, *quâ* fertilization of land, and were only kept free of open ridicule of his doings by their great admiration of his character and services to their cause, Mr. Curwen continued his operations, trials or experiments if you will, at home, and when opportunity offered, made a pilgrimage to distant counties to see what was doing. In London he talked with every man both in and outside the walls of Parliament, whose mind was directed to the landed interests, and open to new convictions thereon. Horticultural and botanical gardens did not escape his observations, as he knew that orchards in some of the warmer vales of Cumberland were of no small value to the farmer, or as rich perquisites to the housewives; and that a study of grasses could not fail to be deeply interesting. Indeed, that study is still needed, and perhaps in no department of practical farming could greater light be thrown than upon the *gramineæ* or grasses, so much is opinion divided in this country as to the respective merits of some of the more common forms of seeds, yet withal the most important as stock-feeders. Every statement, suggestion, or hint—come from what quarter it might, if reasonable at all—that could minister to the changes in the nature of soils, or affect their composition in any way, was received with candour and readiness by Mr. Curwen. Working in the dark, as many of the operations upon the farm really were, Mr. Curwen sought for light from every quarter that offered to shine, however feebly, upon the hidden secrets of nature.

CHAPTER IX.

PORTRAITURE.

Portraits, busts, and engravings. Physical and mental traits. Prone to gallantry. His temperance, early rising, energy, great strength. His large hands and good measure.

HAVING traced Mr. Curwen's growth from youth to manhood, and exemplified part of his parliamentary and agricultural career, it may be well at this stage of the narrative—pointing to a period which embraces Curwen's prime of life, if not the zenith of his fame—to speak more precisely of his personality, his habits and character, and of his home and social relations. Looking upon the man as limned by the artist and portrayed by the biographer, the reader's judgment is helped to a better understanding of the person biographed. Indeed, the mind of the inquirer receives its best stimulus in the combined delineation of pen and pencil. Both may err, it is true; but when honest feeling dictates the delineation, as the writer humbly claims for his own portion of the portraiture —leaving Smirke's well-established fame to take care of itself,—the historical student is put in possession of the broader features of the man Curwen, upon which he may found his own estimate of the picture presented to him.

Several portraits were taken, and by different artists, of Mr. Curwen, as he appeared within doors, or in the hunting field, standing by his favourite bay nag; but he is best known to a vast majority of Cumberland folk by a line engraving, where he is represented at full length, with papers in his hand, in the attitude of addressing the House of Commons, and displaying all the vigour and earnestness of the people's tribune. Mr. Garrard took a marble bust of him in 1809, which bust corresponds a good deal in character with the portrait painted by Smirke—the lithographed likeness of which graces the frontispiece of this volume—and shows Mr. Curwen in his earlier adolescence. The greater number of these portraits, and likewise the head and bust in marble, are to be seen at Workington Hall. The Rev. W. B. Christian, of Milntown, Isle of Man, possesses a portrait of his grandfather that many consider equal if not superior to those in possession of the Curwen family, or to be met with in Cumberland. This reverend gentleman has a series of portraits of his Manx ancestors—the Christians,—valuable as a family possession and at the same time historically illustrative of the men who, almost in continuous succession for centuries, acted as Deemsters, or Chief Judges, of the island. Though looking upon the portrait of his grandsire, John Christian Curwen, as not the least valuable of the series, he most kindly offered to send it to England for the use of the writer, but the risk of damage or loss forbade the writer's acceptance of a compliment that he begs very gratefully to acknowledge in these pages. In selecting Smirke's portrait, the writer has been guided by the fact of its comparative rarity, and its

more adolescent indications of Curwen—about the period that saw him fighting for constitutional freedom and the liberty of the subject, or as he might have looked when confronting Pitt or Wyndham, and as a trustworthy representative of the people's privileges and franchised rights.

Mr. Curwen has been generally spoken of as more striking than handsome; yet many, looking at Smirke's * portrait, have been disposed to think him no less handsome than striking in appearance. The writer has heard him described as possessing "a noble face and a noble carriage," and that being so well proportioned a man in every way, he looked remarkably well on horseback, with all the bearings of a thorough gentleman. The difference of age—the smooth contour of early manhood disappearing with advancing years and loss of adipose tissue, and being replaced by increase of lines and a prominence to the harsher features—will account for the difference of opinion that prevailed regarding his physiognomy. He was tall, above six feet high, powerfully built, strong in body, strong in limb, and particularly strong-fisted. His head belonged to the round type and presented nothing remarkable in its configuration beyond a fulness over the eyebrows, the region assigned to the perceptive faculties by the phrenologists. He had light brown hair, that grew lower down the forehead than ordinary, but which he carefully brushed upward so as to give elevation to his open countenance. He had dark-blue full eyes, a

* Robert Smirke, R.A., was a native of Wigton, Cumberland, and rose from common house-painting to the highest portrait-taking in the metropolis.

large aquiline nose, handsome mouth, well set off by the chin, whilst neck and bust left nothing to be desired. His temperament was of a mixed character, without, however, a tinge of the phlegmatic in its composition. His facial features, epecially the nose, caught everybody's attention, whilst his responsive eyes and expressive lips gave an agreeable air to his general physiognomy. No man, it has often been said, could listen to Mr. Curwen for many minutes without being struck with his mental superiority and the excellence of his conversation; and no educated woman possessing charms of her own could sit long in his company without perceiving an emotional air or passionate sentiment playing around his mouth; nor, guided by that fine instinct of her sex—aptly viewed as of greater discernment than the reasoning faculty itself, —fail to observe that Curwen was an attractive mortal of strong and special penchant. The Workington people were proud of Curwen's personal appearance, as they had reason to be with his personal attentions to their interests; and the ladies were prone to contrast him with his political antagonist, Lord Lonsdale, by saying, "Curwen is so like a nobleman and true gentleman, but Lowther is only one by name."

The intellectual and animal powers were pretty fairly balanced in Curwen, and both shone far above the common standard; and perhaps of the two the pulsations of the sensuous life seemed the more expressed. The former, impelled by a vigorous temperament, elevated him to the position of a parliamentary celebrity; the latter served to endear him to the graceful in society, and occasionally, it

must be acknowledged, to carry him beyond the admitted proprieties of wedded life. His eyebrows, raised and prominent; his clear eyes, mobile lips, and full organ of voice, seemed to harmonize for the display of oratorical powers. Nor were these powers at all dormant in Curwen. They found effective utterance within the walls of Parliament, on hustings' platforms, and in the public assemblies of his fellow-countrymen. His words, suasive and polite, were equally captivating in the social circle—too captivating, indeed, to the fairer creation, who loved him for his graciousness of manner and endearing attentions.

Mr. Curwen was a gallant in the days of George the Third, when gallantry was *the mode*, and fair damsels and ripe duchesses followed suit. To-day society, whatever it may be at heart, wears a more correct outward show—pleasant to look upon, as upholding virtue and promoting social integrity. Measured by the conventional standard of talk, or strict ethical rule, Mr. Curwen would be found wanting where he should have been strong; but measured by the customs of his own day, or the judicial revelations of the present, he might be found in larger company than world-outsiders or the blissful immaculate would be disposed to credit. To arrive at a proper estimate of the *men*, it would be necessary to hark back to the *times* of the Georges. If the English Court rejoiced in mistresses, why, it was asked, should not "the faithful Commons" indulge in the same pastimes? If the death-scene of George the Second's queen could pass without a challenge by the Court circle, bishops and all; and Ladies Sarah and Susan —— could figure as bridesmaids to George the Third; and

all the iniquities of the Fourth George affect not his position of "first gentleman in Europe;" then assuredly large excuse was offered the upper ten thousand for incontinence and waywardness. Ordinary mortals, sinning against the standards of the age, often pass unscathed; public men, on the other hand, are subjected to a severer ordeal; and a slight rent in the coat of a man like Curwen appears to Mrs. Grundy a hugely torn and tattered garment. This feminine frailty of Curwen's was often touched upon by the masses, and occasionally without regard to strict correctness. Thus, when he was addressing a large meeting of the industrial classes at Workington, and wished them to benefit by his counsel, he concluded an emphatic appeal by saying,—"Have I not always done my best for you? have I not been like a father to you all for years?" "Aye," cried out a woman of effrontery, "aye, thou's reet, Squire—thou's fadder to nearly hawf o' t' town!" Women with illegitimate children often sought to make a scapegoat of the Squire; and on one occasion, when circumstances proved beyond all doubt that he could not be responsible, and the hussy was taken to task for her conduct, she tried to excuse herself by saying, "I was told that the Squire was the best paymaster." The Workington disciple of David—though far short of the famed Hebrew patriarch—was charged with more than his due; and the jocular mode of speaking of his amours naturally led to an exaggeration of both their numbers and significance amongst the vulgar—too often the mouthpiece of the whole community.

Acting on the maxim of "nothing extenuate, nor set aught down in malice," the writer neither seeks to

cement fractured moralities, if such cementing was at all attainable, nor uncharitably to heap ashes upon a brother mortality long since gathered to the dust. Whatever the shortcomings of the man may have been, they were not made offensive to the public eye, and Curwen was everywhere received with open arms in the best circles of England, and not less esteemed in that "highly moral and Christian land"—Scotland.

Mr. Curwen's conversation was so pleasing, and his whole manner so gracious, that he was compared, in London circles, to the Prince Regent, afterwards George the Fourth, in gentlemanly bearing. In fulfilling the great obligations of humanity—marrying early, living not less heartily than hospitably, and acting courteously in a society that had nothing to aspire to, and nothing to pine for—Curwen enjoyed all the amenities of polite and intellectual life, and enjoyed them to the full. Unlike his parliamentary associates—Fox, Sheridan, and others, whose club symposia were extravagant, if not at times saturnalian in kind—Curwen was moderate at table and temperate in his cups; remarkably so for the dissolute times which marked the first years of his public life. At home he was known to have the best-stored cellar in Cumberland and to be the smallest patron of its contents. His habits were simple and rural-like at the family "Hall," where he rose early, breakfasted on porridge and milk, and had nothing more till his six o'clock dinner. His dress betokened the farmer, often grey and shabby-looking, but well suited for country pursuits—enclosing, draining, and other field operations.

Of his energy and decision in rural matters abundant examples could be offered. It may suffice to relate the following:—One autumnal morning he was at the Schoose by *half-past five*, and after a moment's consideration with his bailiff, George Atkin, as to the cutting of a large field of oats on the common, said, "Yes, we had better have them down to-day. Get 500 shearers at once." A boy was despatched on a pony at full speed to Workington, to rouse the bellman, who, in his turn, roused the workfolk by crying through the streets, "Shearers for the Squire!" Men women, and young folk, to the number of 500, were tolled off, as they reached the Market-place, with the "Squire wants you on the common—3*s.* 6*d.* a day;" and the Squire got them to work, and spent the greater part of the day with them. His vigour amounted to impetuosity, as this instance reveals; and if the feeling for a certain line of action became predominant, nothing would check him. If a thing had to be done, it were well to have it done quickly; but now and then it would have been as well, if not better, if things had been left undone. He wanted patience in farming, and could not brook delay. To him the farming world appeared a very slow coach, and he wished to hasten its steps beyond the jog-trot pace. Whenever a matter of opinion had to be decided by experiment or observation, he never calculated the cost of proving it—the goal of knowledge being his only aim, and this he pursued with unalterable purpose.

Occasionally, when the weather was threatening or farming operations were unusually pressing, he would stay out of doors from *five* in the morning till *nine* at

night, among his work-folk; and if his breakfast had been neglected, took a simple luncheon in the harvest-field—thus affording pleasure and encouragement to the reapers. When Mr. Curwen was said to be "at home" during the Parliamentary recess, it would have been more correct to describe him as "not at home;" for if farming work did not absorb his attention, he was engaged in other directions, attending to the wants of his people—supplying them, as well as "the deserving poor in the town, with meal and potatoes, and often meat, at reduced prices, besides employing every person able to work who belonged to the parish." These multifarious engagements made him very irregular at his dinner-hour, and gave great umbrage to the faithful housekeeper at the Hall. Miss Jane Christian Blamire, the favoured niece of Mr. Curwen, writing from Workington Hall to her sister, thus describes her views of the doings there:—"I have had great pleasure in seeing my uncle so calm and gentle and kind to every one, and appearing happy himself, and to wish others to be so. Miss H. scolds at his spending all his time at his *meal*-shop, as she calls it; but I confess, when one sees how satisfied his mind is with his endeavours to do good, I think his friends ought to rejoice; and I sometimes quote to her that charity, we are told, covereth a multitude of sins. He certainly gives up all his time to others, and has kept dinner waiting beyond the hour fixed for most days; and Miss H. is in bad humour with him, and says he wastes their dinners and his money, and fatigues himself to death." The household lady was privileged to speak, and it must be admitted that she spoke somewhat to the purpose.

If Curwen's mental powers shone above his neighbours, his bodily strength was almost unequalled and specially remarkable for a gentleman knowing nothing of manual labour. On observing two of his men struggling unsuccessfully to lift a large stone into a cart, he put them aside, and lodged the stone without their aid. It was not unusual for him to dismount and show his ploughmen how to cut a furrow, or to render help to his workfolk when he saw them beaten. So large was his hand that, when about to welcome his young friends, the Bensons of St. Helens, he would say, "Come, my lads, both hands at once; my fist is big enough." Old Abel, the servant-man at the Hall, who could relate so much of his master's doings and sayings, and big-handed operations, used to boast of the good weight and measure that Mr. Curwen gave when paying his labourers in kind, and to instance the fact of his master's big fist being plunged into the poke, or bag, for an additional serving of stuff, after the balance had been well cast down in favour of the buyer. This overdoing on the side of liberality was highly characteristic of Curwen, who, with the limb, the thews, the stature, bulk, and big assemblage of a man, had heart to match in full generosities, as he had nerve to uphold and direct his Trojan spirit.

CHAPTER X.

PORTRAITURE (*continued*).

Mr. Curwen endowed for Work—a tolerant Churchman; erects Schools and pays the Teachers; establishes various Institutions. Mrs. Curwen's Character. Workington favoured. Mr. Curwen aids his Opponents. His Mining Operations and Disappointments—his Anecdotes—his "Hunt" and Costume.

BORN to property and position, Mr. Curwen was more than half-way towards the attainment of the good wishes of his neighbours and fellow-countrymen, for whatever may be said in favour of democratic wisdom and discernment, and of late years much fulsome adulation has been offered in that direction, John Bull has a hero-worship of a flesh-pot kind. He respects big-acred Squires, and, as all the world knows, dearly loves "a live Lord." Fustian and flummery may suit the men and the hour, but broadcloth and victuals will ever weigh with the masses. Now Mr. Curwen was a representative of the substantials of life; stately in himself, and living in a stately Hall. Besides he was ever homely and approachable, so that no wonder he gained the good opinion of all classes of men—the plebeian, not less than the patrician. He was not the mere holder of houses and lands, though he was rich in both, and rich in manorial rights; but he was richer far in per-

sonal endowments and practical sagacity, and that ready aptitude to meet the every-day world around him.

Mr. Curwen possessed a well-organized nervous system and a temperament highly conducive to the larger manifestations of humanity, and with such a making-up of the physical man, could hardly fail in the real work and daily services of life. Constituted as he was, labour must have been a pleasure of itself —labour being but the functional exhibition of powers that could not remain latent in the man. For what can hold the stress of nerves, the overcharged heat of blood in humanity, but exertion and willing enterprise—the active exercise of the mental and bodily operations, whether indicated by special attributes, or in the co-operation of all the faculties ?—

> But well I know
> That unto him who works, and feels he works,
> This same grand year is ever at the doors.

There could be no hiding of such talents as Curwen's under a bushel; there could be no holding back of a man born to head a cause and ever seeking to encourage others in the progressive march to a higher status or civilization. It would have been next to impossible for Curwen, in the healthful enjoyment of all his powers, to remain in a secondary or subordinate position, whatever his lot had been in the social scale. With great breadth of features there was great breadth of feeling in Curwen—an openness or freedom of opinion that seemed to have nothing to fear from its communicativeness or ready assertion.

In all his public relations he exhibited the most catholic and enlightened views; hence his high popu-

larity amongst the thinking portion of the community. Whilst tolerant and full of Christian charity towards the religious opinions of others, even the most *ultra* and self-opinionated,—an example worthy of note to the "holier than thou" kind of folk,—he was a loyal Churchman, regular at the services, and partaking of the ordinances of the Church, and ever regardful of the maintenance of the "State Establishment." He took the chair at Bible Society's meetings, and showed great zeal in the education of the young, by building schools and engaging competent masters and mistresses to superintend them. He instituted a "Savings Bank" in the town of Workington, and "Friendly Societies" amongst his own and other workpeople, and lent every endeavour to promote habits of self-denial and the making of provision for old age and the accidents of life.

The Savings Bank, like other institutions of a similar nature, was instrumental in doing a large amount of good to both town and neighbourhood; many a successful tradesman, and many a well-to-do citizen, had reason to be grateful to Mr. Curwen for its foundation, as to it he owed a respectable position as a member of the Workington community, and the not less heartfelt joy of leaving a money inheritance to his children, along with the greater and more substantial inheritance of good habits and good example: the best inducements to honesty, thrift, and lasting prosperity. Mr. Curwen established the first "Friendly Society" as far back as 1783, the year after his marriage with his cousin; and its success induced him to form others on the same friendly basis, till, at length, there were six societies under his immediate direction;

ex. gr., "the Colliers' Society," "Honourable Society," "Provisional Society," "Schoose Farm Society," and "Friendly Society" *per se*—the remaining one of the group of six being "the Sisterly Society," of which Mrs. Curwen was "Lady Patroness" and by far the greatest benefactor. In introducing "the Sisterly Society," in 1793, it was appropriately written: "The experience of some years has determined the usefulness of societies instituted for the purpose of affording mutual relief and assistance in sickness and misfortune; and every reason which can be urged in the favour of such societies of men, applies with double force to a society of women."

These "Friendly Societies"—so numerous and varied for a single community, yet each with its own special aim and purpose—seem to have been conducted not only on safe principles of management, essential to their well-doing and prosperity, but to have presented some novel features in their formation and general applicability to the wants of the labouring classes. In support of this, it may be stated that the London "Board of Agriculture" solicited Mr. Curwen for a detailed account of the history and rules and workings of the societies;* and to gratify this wish, he entered fully into the whole question of self-help compared with parochial relief. Mr. Curwen attributed much to the establishment of these societies, and if it be found compatible with the limits of this biography, the writer will give some of the more salient facts pertaining to these laudable undertakings of Curwen's in an appendix. His motto in establish-

* "Communications to the Board of Agriculture," vol. iv.

ing these societies seems to have been gathered from Pope's lines:—

> Man, like the gen'rous vine, supported lives;
> The strength he gains is from th' embrace he gives.
> On their own axis, as the planets run,
> Yet make at once their circle round the sun:
> So two consistent motions act the soul;
> And one regards itself, and one the whole.
> Thus God and Nature link'd the gen'ral frame,
> And bade self-love and social be the same.

No man could have taken truer pains to benefit a town, and there is no difficulty in affirming that no one could have been found in the county to expend one-tenth of what Curwen laid out upon objects incidental to the welfare of the people in and around it. And let it be said, to his great honour—greater than is due to his handsome bestowments, and these have never been paralleled, either in extent or significance, to this day in Cumberland,—that he sought no newspaper publicity and no newspaper puffs to announce his doings to the world. Advertisements might be good for traders or as flattering incentives to flourishing "bagmen," but Curwen's magnanimity sought no such channel for its proclamation. He knew the duties as well as the rights attached to citizenship—differing widely, however, as he did, from the vast majority of people in making his rights subservient to the practice of duty, and the higher calling of philanthropy.

Whilst at considerable outlay in establishing various institutions as the bases of improvement,—physical, industrial, and educational,—he did not rest content with this only, but sought, by friendly visits to the domiciles of the artisans and by public ex-

pression of opinion at town's meetings, to promote habits of economy and thrift among the labouring classes, hoping thereby to increase their home comforts, to make them better citizens, and to strengthen the domestic and paternal ties of married life. He was always considerate and kind to the poor, and in times of dearth and high prices used to dispose of farm produce at 30 per cent. below the ordinary sale valuation. As he occasionally took produce instead of money rents, when farming was bad, he possessed greater facilities for distributing his bounties without incurring the risk of destroying the independence of the poor. His help to the aged and infirm was as constant as the rising and setting sun; and then there was the general aid in times of scarcity, and Mrs. Curwen's special aid to the specially distressed —attached or not to the Workington estate.

In all these good and useful undertakings he was well supported by his affectionate wife—a lady of pleasant manners and prepossessing influences, much loved by her family and much esteemed in the county. Mrs. Curwen shared in her husband's public spirit, and joined so heartily in his political encounters with the Lowthers, that rather than see him beaten by "the Yellows," she would have had her husband sacrifice every penny he possessed. She loved with a wife's genuine belief in the superiority of motive and high sagacity that ruled her husband, so that every compliment paid to Curwen's public services found a hearty and sympathetic chord in her breast. Mrs. Curwen was a person of high spirits, fond of politics and Whiggism, and not afraid of Radicalism, if her letters to her relatives at the Oaks,

during the disturbing times of 1816, when the Radicals of Dalston alarmed the Bishop and Chancellor of the diocese and their wives, are to be taken as an avowal of her opinions. Thus she writes :—"The last meeting of the Dalston Radicals seems to have been held within view of your own windows; yet I dare say the spinning-wheels* would go as merrily round, and the books be read with as much pleasure as if the poor misguided creatures were as fast by the neck as Mrs. G. and Mrs. F. could wish them. You seem to have no Lady Radicals in Dalston, and however much they may add to the *effect*, I think the *defect* is a matter of congratulation." In the same gossiping letter she writes of a lady :—"She has not a particle of the spiritual swagger of Methodism about her. If she really thinks her neighbours desperately wicked, she keeps it to herself." Again, of another young

* This was a happy allusion of Mrs. Curwen's to one of the daily occupations of Mrs. Blamire and her daughters—the happy inmates of the Oaks. The domestic spinning-wheel, or small Saxon wheel for spinning flax, is no longer seen, except as a curiosity of the past. How the times are changed! When Mrs. Curwen wrote the letter quoted above—fifty years ago, and indeed to a much later date—the spinning-wheel and well-filled distaff occupied the front kitchen of every well-regulated country household, and took high place in the parlours of the landed gentry. It was the solace of the evening to women-folk when there was no company to entertain and no books to read; nor was it always thrown aside even for these—for as the wheels went "merrily round," the tongues of the ladies could be quite as freely exercised.

The last time the writer saw "the spinning-wheel" was at Thackwood, in 1840, when its active operations were guided by the nimblest of fingers—the niece of Mrs. Curwen, and one of the party alluded to in the letter. This most excellent person—Jane Christian Blamire—possessing all the charming attributes of her sex, thought less of the gay world than her wheel; thus she writes after her return home from Workington Hall: "I feel so little at home that for three nights the parties have danced before my eyes all night, and I find my spinning-wheel in the chimney-corner at the old nook so much more suitable."

person:—"I should say the lass was as harmless as the Radicals. I wish she would inspire a little terror into Mary the maid, as I have my suspicions it might be salutary." Possibly the maid had been suspected of some matrimonial leanings to a fervid exponent of Radicalism.

Mrs. Curwen had a large correspondence, and formed a bond of union between a considerable circle of North Country folk and the higher classes of the Isle of Man. Before her health began to fail, "the Hall" was seldom without visitors, and nowhere could happier gatherings of gentlefolk be found with "mine host," a man of the world, clever, lively, and conversational, and "mine hostess," charmingly pleasant and winning. These reunions or assemblies gave a colouring to society in the West of Cumberland. Putting aside the material interests and prosperity of a community, in which the family were so deeply interested, there is nothing so much to be deplored in the fall of the Curwens of that day as the loss of a society that had within itself much graceful feeling combined with the not less agreeable pleasures of refined and intellectual converse.

Affable, persevering, and gentlemanly, Mr. Curwen was qualified to succeed in any enterprise within the reach of attainment; for, however trying to the temper and unpromising in character the circumstances might be, if he gave his soul to the cause, he was almost sure to carry the day. His forbearance, persuasiveness, and a gradually increasing argumentative tone that went far to convince, gave him great power in overcoming opposition. Amidst the rivalry and contentions which beset men of property

and public position, Mr. Curwen was often called upon to play a prominent part, both for himself and his county-folk. He belonged to the class of men whom the world would style, and aptly designate, "thorough-going." He cared nothing for party feeling if a public undertaking was concerned. Thus, when the inhabitants of Wigton felt aggrieved by a toll-bar being placed between the town and one of its chief agricultural supplies—Abbey Holme,—a deputation was appointed to wait, not upon my Lord Lonsdale, with whom the cause of the gravamen rested, and from whom no redress could be had, but upon Mr. Curwen, the general benefactor of the county. The deputation consisted of the late Mr. Rooke, of Akehead, and Mr. Rigg, the present venerable representative of the commercial interests of Wigton; and though both strong "Yellows," they were received with the greatest kindness by Mr. Curwen, whose perseverance gained them their wishes; and Wigton was thereby saved a market-day annoyance that might have become a lasting market-day detriment and grievance.

He was generous-minded to his political opponents, even to the forgiveness of the most rude comments and unjust aspersions upon his character, when personalities ran very high and the "Yellows" knew no bounds to their libellous vituperation. In those days political jealousy amounted to dire hate—spiteful, mischievous, and incorrigible; yet he seems to have been more forgiving of its worst forms than he was of the shabby ingratitude that too often crossed his path. He was a great favourite in the House of Commons, on both sides of the Speaker's

chair. His honest manliness, combined with high gentlemanly feeling, naturally won upon others. Even his fearless advocacy of rights, which might be called popular out of doors, but which were assuredly anything but popular within Parliament, did not lessen the number or attachment of his friends on the Tory benches.

When seen in Workington, Mr. Curwen was generally busy with something for the benefit of the town, or in trying to enlist the co-operation of the well-to-do inhabitants in the shipping and commercial interests. He was at the expense of a local Sanitary Act—a thing scarcely dreamt of in that day, and no trifling matter to accomplish single-handed; he erected a pier at the mouth of the Derwent; and laid out fabulous sums in the sinking of coalpits at a time of life when he might have sought ease and retirement. The sinking of the Isabella pit—named after his wife—tried Mr. Curwen very sadly, as well it might. When a depth of 120 fathoms had been reached, the point where the seam of nine or ten feet ought to have been gained, the sinkers met with what is technically called a "nip," the ordinary roof and floor of the main seam being nearly in contact. A drift of 400 yards in a horizontal direction was necessary before the seam resumed its usual proportions. After spending at least fifty thousand pounds, the disappointment of meeting the "nip" instead of the main seam was so bitterly felt by the spirited proprietor, that he actually shed tears when recounting the fact to his worthy friend Mr. John Wilson Fletcher, of Greysouthen and Tarn Bank. It may be noted here that Mr. Curwen had a thorough practical acquaintance with all the

details of mining operations.* As his own wants were few outside the electioneering vortex, his ambition in these great undertakings was not prompted by the desire of riches so much as increasing the prosperity of a town with which he felt he and his forefathers had been closely bound for many centuries. Forgetful of "the ways and means," the philanthropic wish prevailed over the pocket consideration in this, as in many other schemes that engaged him; and it is much to be regretted that these noble aims were attended with a great sacrifice, to the detriment both of his own property and his children's inheritance.

Mr. Curwen's powers of conversation have been described as of a superior order, and his post-prandial story-telling was equally remarkable. His stories derived no small amount of piquancy in the telling from his own fund of humour, as well as their own cosmopolitan character. Meeting with so many people in town and country, from lords and ladies of high degree to bucolic folk and buxom landladies on the road, he had a fund of anecdotes that seemed inexhaustible. His *forte* lay in the jocular line, the socially broad and parliamentary satirical; and as he could personify the parties "taken off," he gave a pleasant colouring to the well-told anecdote. Mr. Blamire used to say that his uncle Curwen's stories were the best he ever heard, and that a selection of

* In conversing with the late Mr. J. W. Fletcher on mining matters and the difficulties so frequently met with by those who risk their fortunes in such undertakings, Mr. Curwen remarked that "two hitches and a roll were better than a nip." Of the latter description of mining interruptions he had had bitter experience. "Hitches" and "rolls" are local terms for different kinds of dislocation in the coal strata.

Curweniana would have made one of the most amusing books ever published. The narrative of Mr. Curwen's frequent journeys to and from London, as given by himself, was quite as racy as Sterne's "Sentimental Journey," and a good deal more real in character, as well as being rendered in broader Saxon than the waggy Churchman's.

Curwen was fond of driving *tandem* with three or four bays occasionally, and a blind "leader." His carriage horses were black, and both kinds were first-class in character and style. He kept packs of hounds and harriers in his more youthful days, and greatly enjoyed the field, the chase, and all rural sports, like a thorough Englishman of the olden time. When he saw "the field" making for a gap or broken-down part of a fence, he put spurs to his horse to reach it first, and then, bringing his horse to a stand-still in front of the gap, would call out, "If you will ride, gentlemen, ride; but not through gaps, if you please." His soul was in the sport, and wishing everybody to be as hearty and courageous as himself, he seemed regardless of hedges or the possible growl of farmers; thus verifying in part the sad complaint of Ned in the famous ballad of Miss Blamire,—

> While girt fwok they ride down my hedges,
> And spang o'er my fields o' new wheat,
> Nought but ill words I get for my damage;—
> Can ony man tell me *that's reet?*

Mr. Curwen might be analogous in appearance, but was not in reality, to Ned's instances, as he always made an allowance to farmers for any damage that occurred by the wilful trespass of himself or companions in the hunt, so that a growl against him

(Curwen) would have been the last thing heard in Cumberland. His invitations to the hunt were general and unrestricted, and many a jolly dinner commemorated the day's sport. No man could have had a more hearty following "in the field." Like a true squire, he was master and owner of his own dogs. "Subscription packs" and other squirearchisms came in with these latter days, and they are but a "brummagen" counterfeit of the Curwen metallic.

The writer is not informed as to the costume of the West Cumberland Hunt; it may or may not have resembled the Carlisle—white and green; but Curwen's dress was said to have been of the most perfect order, and a pattern example to his fellow-huntsmen. This remark could hardly apply to him on his return as a young man from the Royal Hunt at Fountainbleau, when he presented himself at the Ewanrigg "meet" in Bourbon costume, with a gold watch on each side of his person, chains, seals, and pendants to match, with gay contrasts of colour, *point de Venise* lace, and other finery. The Ewanrigg folk stared at the "young squire," and the assembled hunt were no less bewildered by the shining adornments of the master of the field; much in the same way as the Workingtonians at a subsequent period used to rush outside their doors to see Curwen in his cardinal's cloak hanging down to his heels, and fur cuffs and other novelties, constituting him, in the language of the day, "a great swell." The gaiety of the outer man belonged rather to his youthful days and state occasions, such as county balls and other public demonstrations. On the hustings he appeared in blue coat and bright buttons, yellow vest, and light

or white inexpressibles. His voluminous "white choker" helped, with the dark blue, to set off to advantage the expressive lines of his face; and as he took off his hat to present himself to the populace,—

> And bow'd his eminent top to their low ranks,
> Making them proud of his humility;

the effect was grandly impressive, giving rise to cheers that filled the market-place with echoes of human voices. No doubt it was sound policy on the part of Curwen to make a show on the hustings, for shows take with the multitude wonderfully; and whilst the noisier sort of his opponents were spell-bound by his visaged front and bedecked outer man, or sought to address their neighbours in the crowd, Curwen

> Knew the true minute when
> Exception bid him speak, and, at this time,
> His tongue obey'd his hand;

and that hand, placed so benignly across his bosom, as if his heart yearned for every man's interests and every woman's joy of the *proletariat* crew below him, gave a wondrous charm to the aspiring Tribune,

> Whose words all ears took captive.

His dress on the "chairing" triumph was loudest of all; for then it was his special glory, even to the seventieth year of his age, to personify the hero of the day, and in a becoming manner to respond to the martial strain of

> See, the conquering hero comes,

crowned with civic laurels, and crowningly radiant as the wearer of well-deserved dignities.

CHAPTER XI.

[*The reader not interested in strictly Agricultural matters had better pass on to the next chapter.*]

A REVIEW OF MR. CURWEN'S WORK ON AGRICULTURE.

ON New Year's Day, 1808, Mr. Curwen issued an octavo volume, entitled, "Hints on Agricultural Subjects, and on the best means of Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes," which he dedicated to his friend Richard Watson, D.D., Lord Bishop of Llandaff.* This volume arose from an application being made "by a respectable individual to collect and publish, at his own risk, Curwen's Prize Essays on the economical feeding of horses and cattle, with the hope of giving them a more extended circulation." On the same day of the following year (1809), a second edition, "improved and enlarged," was published. In compliance with the demand for a third edition,

* Mr. Curwen and the Bishop of Llandaff were great friends, and both great men in their respective walks. The Bishop was more a chemist and man of the world than a divine, and in his former capacity improved the manufacture of gunpowder; hence it used to be said of gunpowder—"One Friar (Roger Bacon) discovered it, and another Friar (Watson) perfected it." The Bishop was told of this, and that the world thought his chemical science should have had a more peaceful aim; to which he replied—"The more easy in manufacture and the more dangerous in character the destructive element, the sooner would wars be made to terminate."

Mr. Curwen wrote the Preface for the new issue,* and made a few alterations in the first pages of the work, but got no further with it. This is much to be regretted, as with enlarged experience at home, and more abundant opportunities of seeing the progress of agriculture in every division of the kingdom, his third edition, by furnishing more ample details and a more thorough review of his fifteen years' observations, would have been an important acquisition to the annals of British husbandry. Having written so much on farming—and all his writings were of the most clear and practical character,—it would have been well for his own fame, and not less to the benefit of his own class, had he been disposed to epitomize the facts that he had collected from so many sources, and established some general principles of guidance —so much needed in an experimental art or science like agriculture.

Had Mr. Curwen noted the exact condition of Cumberland; the amount of arable, meadow, and waste lands in 1790, or even in 1800, and traced the progress made in the next twenty-five years in enclosing, draining, and new methods of cultivation—mainly effected by his own example and the services of the Workington Society—he would have been able to write one of the most interesting historical chapters in British agriculture. Such a work, embracing everything relating to the breeds of stock, produce, &c., coming from Curwen's hands, would have attracted

* The writer is in possession of Curwen's own copy of the work, interleaved and with marginal notes; and for this much-prized volume he is indebted to the generosity of the Rev. Henry Curwen, the estimable rector of Workington, and grandson of John Christian Curwen.

attention in high quarters, and possibly laid the basis of a Government measure for obtaining statistical information and the necessary data for a more correct appreciation of the advancing agricultural interests of England. Having seen such great improvements in his own time, Mr. Curwen believed that "there was not yet drawn from the earth a fifth part of the produce that might be obtained by a more perfect system of agriculture, by a more general enclosure of waste lands, and by a proper economy in the feeding of stock." The first chapter in his work on agriculture is—

"ON THE STEAMING OF POTATOES AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR HAY IN THE FEEDING OF HORSES."

In October, 1801, Curwen commenced his experiment of feeding work-horses with steamed potatoes. His experiment arose from necessity rather than choice. He had a hundred colliery horses to feed; the hay crop in the north of England and Ireland had been a failure; the price was high, and likely to be higher; and great alarm was entertained as to the supply of hay holding out the winter. Difficulties met Curwen on every side in conducting the experiments; but that which is imperative leaves no room for option, so he had to persevere, the alternative being potatoes or nothing; and he at length succeeded in establishing a new mode of feeding horses. For years he continued his system of potatoes and cut straw, and was satisfied—1st, as to the saving of expense; 2ndly, as to its being food on which horses could perform their work; and, 3rdly, as to the health and condition of the horses so fed.

As usual with Curwen, he adopted no half-measures, but went heartily into the whole subject of feeding—trying mixtures of food, the cutting of hay and straw, &c., and not unfrequently calling in his neighbours to help him to form a decision on the respective merits of the food used. His experiments left no room for cavil, and his deductions were so well founded that future years served to confirm their accuracy and general application. He made his experiments known, and private individuals, both civil and military, gave their testimony in his favour; whilst in the Carron Iron Works, and in numerous collieries in Scotland, the practice was followed and approved of. Every item of expenditure was noted—the purchase of the articles at market price, the weight of the different kinds of food consumed, the labour bestowed, the outlay on apparatus for steaming, and everything that could illustrate his plan and make it intelligible to others—engravings of the houses, boilers, &c., being given with the description. A portion of corn formed part of the daily food, and now and then variations with carrots, but the great principle in view remained intact. Owing to the scarcity of the crop of potatoes, and the great demand for the esculent for the use of man, Curwen, with due regard to the interests and comforts of the labouring classes, reserved his potatoes for their use, and then had recourse to other substitutes for feeding horses. In this way his experiments were subjected to the best of all tests—namely, the comparative method. As soon as the potatoes were withdrawn, the horses failed in strength and appearance; on resuming the potatoes, the amendment was strikingly visible.

Mr. Curwen communicated to the Board of Agriculture an Essay

"ON SUPPLYING MILK FOR THE POOR."

A medical pamphlet written by Dr. Samuel Ferns, showing the number of infantile lives lost to the community for want of that "salubrious aliment" milk, induced Curwen to try what could be done to furnish a plentiful supply of new milk during the winter months to the people of Workington. He first inquired into the mode of feeding cows in the neighbourhood of large towns, as also the expense attending it, and learned that the principal dependence was upon "grains" got from breweries or distilleries. As "grains" were not to be had at Workington, and the price of hay precluded the possibility of employing it to advantage in feeding milch cows, he was driven to green crops—cabbages, turnips, coleseed; and the last named he prized most of all. He also tried oil-cake, and obtained richer milk and increased quantity; but such was the prejudice, for a time, against the milk so got, that the children of Workington—no doubt set on by others—used to run after the milk-cart, crying out, "Oil-cake milk!" with additional epithets, if not hisses. Here was the old story—ignorance venting itself upon any novel scheme, however philanthropic in its cause and action. It would have been no great wonder if the brazen crew had gone further than street cries, and stoned their prophet. After a time the Workingtonians preferred the Schoose farm milk to any offered for sale in the town, on account of its superior character and feeding qualities —thus reversing their former decision.

Curwen noted every circumstance bearing upon his experiments—the kind of green crop, weight, feeding qualities, and expense; then the kinds of stock and ages of the beasts, their health, and condition; so that the balance-sheet might be the closest approximation to the truth. He became so strongly impressed with the advantages of milk to the poor that he wished landowners to compel farmers to supply the families employed on their respective farms with milk at a fair price. All householders and cottagers would have rejoiced to see Curwen's wishes carried out—as milk, oddly enough, is always most difficult to get near to its source. He looked upon the supply of milk as an act of benevolence to the labouring poor, and seemed fully aware of its nutritious qualities and cheapness as compared with other kinds of food. He wisely said, "To preserve health, to promote the comforts of the labouring classes of society, and to save numbers from an untimely grave, are objects of interest to the man, to the parent, and to the politician."

The procuring of milk necessitated great changes in and around the Schoose farm; and in his Essay he enters fully into these considerations, and the respective merits of green crops and other food; also the price, quality, and quantity of milk, and all the collateral circumstances affecting his conclusions. It was highly gratifying to Curwen to witness the increased demand for milk each year. Thus whilst, in 1805, 222,755 quarts of milk were sold in Workington, with a population of 7,000 inhabitants, the sale in 1808 had increased to 507,024, or upwards of half a million of quarts, realizing, at *2d.* per quart, £4,225. The pleasure of conferring so great a boon on the labouring classes

was enhanced by a letter from his valued friend Dr. W. L. Dickinson, who contrasted the miserable condition of the children of the poor living on tea, mixed barley bread made with leaven, &c., with the improved health that followed the daily use of *genuine* new milk obtained from the Schoose farm.

Curwen showed that in consequence of improvement in the mode of conducting the dairy, the profits progressively increased; and having completed his tables, and other information pertaining to the inquiry, his mind seems to have plunged into the political economy and the more general question of supplying food, and the prosperity and happiness of the community. Many pages of the Essay are occupied with his views on national as well as strictly agricultural subjects, and these views bespeak a mind able and ready to discuss great economical questions.

As a statesman he looked beyond his own day, and thought much on the influence of an increasing population, the limited area of English soil, the need of reclaiming wastes, the labour market, emigration, and other matters gravely affecting the national interests.

Writing at a time when war with France was more frequently the rule than the exception, and when our markets were greatly affected by the disturbed state of affairs on the Continent, Curwen, like many others, viewed protective laws as an essential basis of our existence—influenced, no doubt, by his enthusiasm for agricultural pursuits, his early indoctrination, and the more cogent fears of being dependent on foreigners "for the supply of our daily bread." Though slightly amiss in these views, he deserves credit for collating

much statistical information that bore upon commercial intercourse; and if his arguments were more or less fallacious, it must be remembered that his ideas were those of the great majority of the people.

In this valuable essay on milk there is much to be found on the feeding of stock generally, the consumption of food, the acquirement of weight, the comparative merits of the animals, and how far their growth and fattening were influenced by their previous condition, exposure, climate, and other contingencies. Nothing escaped Curwen's observation, from the birth of the animal, through its feeding course, till it fell into the hands of the butcher. He had Long and Short Horns, Hereford, Sussex, Glamorganshire, and Galloway stock under experiment as feeders and fatteners. Then he turned to the history of horses, to ascertain their numbers in England, their characters or breeds, the acreage required to feed them, and how much saving might be effected by the use of carrots, potatoes, and straw, and soiling them in summer, instead of feeding on hay and corn all the year round. And in discussing this subject, and always with an eye to national interests, he suggested a reduction in the number of horses kept for pleasure and other purposes, adding, "From our inexhaustible resources of iron, it would be highly advantageous to have iron railroads in every direction where there was any considerable transport of goods." This was written in 1808, twenty years before any public railroad was contemplated. No doubt he had colliery experience, and had already made a saving of the work of thirty horses by laying iron roads upon inclined planes; but the suggestion contained above

shows the fertility of Curwen's brain, and his anticipation of coming events, and not less his anxiety for the economical saving of the country's resources.

SOILING OF CATTLE.

One of Curwen's communications to the Board of Agriculture was on the Soiling of Cattle, and though a short essay, it was no less original than important. It is difficult to give an abstract of a paper embracing so many experiments and such varied circumstances, but a few general remarks may enable the reader to understand its general purport. Curwen appropriated twenty-four acres of land for the purpose of experiment—eighteen of clover and rye-grass, and six of lucerne; and the stock to be soiled consisted of eighty work-horses, ten milch and twenty calving cows, so that the scale of his inquiry or experiment was ample enough. He found that the weight of green food eaten by horses having an allowance of eight or ten pounds of oats each day was nearly four stones, but after a time three and a half sufficed. He also believed that by cutting straw for horses, one-half of the consumption was saved, and that horses ate it better than when given whole. Milch cows required, on an average, four stones weight of clover and rye-grass —the latter being most predominant,—and eight stones of water each day. He found it a great waste to cut clover when very young, and that rye-grass with clover was much better than either single-handed. He had four crops of lucerne. The first crop, cut in May, yielded six tons per acre; the second succeeded on the 10th July, and lasted his stock ten days; there were four tons per acre on the third crop, and it

lasted till the end of September; and the last crop was cut in November, and afforded nearly two tons per acre. This last crop of lucerne and the remaining clover, with the tops of eight acres of carrots (which weighed upwards of three tons and a half per acre), fed his stock till the end of November. The stock were allowed to pick what they liked from potato-tops. The cattle appeared very partial to the carrot-tops, and these were viewed by Curwen as equal to any kind of green crop. He was satisfied with the condition of both horses and cattle, and of the superiority of soiling over grazing, and that the horses could not have performed their work better had they been fed on "hard meat." The writer may be permitted to observe, in support of Curwen's views—though derived from a different climate than the north of England,—that the soiling of horses answers admirably well in Italy and Egypt, and along the shores of the Mediterranean generally. Indeed, more work is got out of the Egyptian mule and donkey by this feeding than could well be credited.

The experience of a second year strengthened Curwen's opinions as to the advantage of soiling cattle. He tabulated a monthly account of consumption and cost, which tended to show a balance of profit in favour of soiling to the extent of £13 per acre and upwards. He considered soiling to possess other advantages besides this high pecuniary one—the saving of ground, the opportunity of keeping large stocks near populous towns where an extent of pasture could not be had; whilst the public were benefited by the surplus land left applicable to the supply

of other necessaries. His last written opinions on the subject were as follows:—"The advantages of soiling unite, first, the saving of food, the making of manures, and the superior health and condition of the cattle, as well as their giving more milk. The progress it has made amongst all classes of farmers in Cumberland affords the most convincing proof of the benefits derived from it."

Guided by a suggestion of the Bishop of Llandaff, he weighed different grasses every day for the space of a month, to ascertain the loss sustained by them from evaporation, and found that with clover and lucerne the loss was greater in making into hay than that of any other species of grass. This experiment naturally pointed to their superiority for soiling.

Carrots next engaged his attention; and he found this "admirable root," as he called it, to answer perfectly as a part substitute for oats. When ten pounds of oats were given each day, he ascertained that four pounds could be taken away if their place was supplied by five pounds of carrots. His experiment was on a large scale, and embraced the feeding of eighty horses. Curwen spoke very highly of mangel-wurzel, both for its feeding powers and its remaining fresh and succulent till the end of June. In the usual agricultural report, he communicated the results of his inquiries to the Society, and each year he received testimony in favour of his plan of soiling. Amongst others who wrote to Curwen in approval, was John Dodgson, of Bewcastle,—a man famous for his local knowledge and peculiarities.

Curwen made an experiment with two kyloes, to determine the respective increase in their growth by

soiling and grazing over a period of 140 days, weighing and noting every circumstance in a way that few would be disposed to imitate. On slaughtering the kyloes, it was found that the soiled one left a profit each day of 10½*d.*, the grazed one 7¾*d.* A long-horned cow, fed similarly, yielded 13*d.* a day profit: it consumed a greater weight of food in 100 days than the kyloe did in 140. The progress of these experiments induced him to tie up six very moderate three-year-old Highlanders, on the 27th of June, feeding them for the greatest part of the time with grass cut from hedges, plantations, and walls, viewed as of little, if any, value. "This experiment was highly satisfactory; how much food of this kind does every farmer waste, and what is worse, suffers it to seed and multiply weeds!" It was no part of Curwen's plan to feed poor animals; but deeming it needful to destroy the weeds, he might appropriate them and the coarse grass to the feeding of these rough Highlanders. "It admits of no question," as he said, "that for soiling the most valuable cattle make the best return; for inferior food, animals of less size may be better adapted."

GENERAL HINTS ON FARMING.

No man had better opportunities of knowing the ups and downs of farming—its best and worst sides; and no one could write more systematically upon it as a business calling than Curwen. His "Farming by Gentlemen" contains as much sound advice as could be well expressed in the same number of words. He admitted his own shortcomings and neglect, and records the losses sustained by trusting to bailiffs,

instead of personal superintendence. He wrote: "Fame or profit are the ordinary incentives to exertion. Is there any branch of trade, are there even any of the sports of the field practised with success, which have not cost much time and attention in acquiring? . . . . . He who would wish to farm with credit, satisfaction, and advantage, will do well to mark the words of old Cato, 'Miserum est, cum Villicus Dominum docet'"—which might be, for Cumbrians, translated thus: "It's a bad look-out when the servant has to show the master." Every failure with Curwen proved a fresh incentive to energy and exertion, and he found that practical knowledge is the most serviceable, and perhaps the only knowledge to be relied upon. He attributed the slow progress of agriculture to want of encouragement, and that till the demand for the produce of the earth exceeded the quantity produced at home, the stimulus to husbandry was wanting; and had he lived twenty years longer, he would have seen this and other views of his verified in a marked way.

ON DRAINING, LEASES, CLEANING OF LAND.

Curwen's opinions on drainage are those held by all experienced men of the present day. Shallow draining was soon found to be worthless, so he went boldly in for deep drains—treating the matter of expense with as little concern as railway engineers do in the present day. People condemned him for his excessive outlay; and, on the other hand, he affirmed that the first three crops met the outlay of Moor Close Farm, the draining of which cost £25 per acre! He was a great advocate for leases, and used to cite the

extraordinary progress made in the cultivation of part of Mr. Coke's farm at Holkham by his granting twenty-one years' lease to farmers, one of whom spent £1,000 upon the mere fences of his farm. "Were I," says Curwen, "to be called upon to define what should be the object, wishes, and pride of a landlord, I could not do it better than by stating 'a toast' given by Mr. Coke at one of his sheep-shearings: 'Good tenants* and long leases.'"

Up to Curwen's time, Lady-day was the usual period of entering upon farms. He changed it to Candlemas on his own estate, and his practice has become pretty general, as it is the most advisable, throughout these northern counties.

The eradication of weeds he placed only second in import to draining; and to effect the cleaning of land there appeared to him but two methods — naked fallows and the turnip crop. He advocated deep ploughing, and wide furrows for potatoes and green crops; and believed, from experiments made (and these had a scientific basis easily comprehended) on the amount of evaporation from the land caused by ploughing, that important benefits accrued from the frequent stirring of the soil. These benefits were more strikingly seen in dry seasons, when comparisons could be instituted between his wide and his neighbours' narrow furrows, both as to the crop and the cleanliness of the land. On cabbage-ground the difference in his favour seems to have been well

* The first part of this toast is the great difficulty, would be the argument of those who have witnessed the first years of a lease spent in robbing the land, and leaving the landlord *minus* his rent for a portion of the remainder of the lease.

marked. He buried the manure as deep as possible, and, as he believed, with advantage.

When Lord Brougham, a few years ago, advised the farmers assembled at an agricultural meeting to buy threepenny note-books, to record all the expenses and income of their farms, his words were quoted by the local press as something quite oracular. Curwen, forty years previously, wrote: "Every transaction within the farm ought to be clearly defined, and the expense and gain as fairly deduced as any mathematical problem. The cost of feeding, the weight and degree of nourishment in every species of green crop, should be fully known, &c." There was no press with a bit of agricultural life in it fifty years ago to echo these sentiments of Curwen's, or the farming interests of Cumberland might have been better understood, both as to rental of land and the incomings and outgoings of the farmer.

LABOUR AND WORKMEN.

Curwen wished a good hearty feeling to exist between the employer and the employed, and did his best to promote it. He was in favour of an apprenticeship system on large farms, with the view of obtaining educated lads and those who would be really capable of receiving instruction. In this opinion he was supported by his colliery experience, as well as a knowledge of the general practice amongst tradesfolk. It is curious that his proposal—or, it may be said, practice—was not acted upon elsewhere, as one great difficulty with agricultural labourers is their ignorance and thoughtlessness, and both these might be lessened by schooling and a better bringing up to

the work. He held out rewards for good conduct, and found the plan useful. A lad regularly indentured, and under the control of masters who can teach him his duties, is a very different being from the lad brought up in a loose way, untrained, and with no other idea in his noddle than putting in the day, and getting his wages at the end of it. This subject—"labour and workmen"—is well entitled to further discussion; and the agricultural societies might be very profitably employed in adapting this commercial principle to farming—the furtherance of the master's interests and the advancement of the servant's welfare.

The tables which he furnished, with a record of his different experiments—so varied indeed as apparently to have embraced every agricultural subject that required elucidation—were models of order and classification. In treating of receipts and expenditure, he gave every item in his accounts, from guineas to farthings. His telescopic eye seems to have embraced the widest range of the farming world; and after considering the food and wages of his labourers, he devoted a chapter to "Taste." On this subject he wrote: "To see the cottages near to opulence, clean and comfortable, is most creditable; and besides the gratification it affords, it has the sanction of good policy. It proves a great temptation to families of worth and probity to seek such situations. The cheerful and cleanly appearance of the cottages in Monmouthshire gives, in my opinion, a decided preference to that county in point of beauty over every part of England; it seems to proclaim, there man is happy! Dirt and ruin never fail to inspire the idea

of misery. Attention to the cottager's comfort is attended with little cost; I mean giving him a small garden, and planting that, as well as the walls of his house, with fruit-trees. This affords not only a wholesome food for the family, but the surplus of it is employed for other necessaries, and the care and attention paid to it does not break in on the cottager's labour."

The chapters on Agricultural Works, Value of Land, Markets, Letting, Bargains, Tithes, Irrigation, Choice of Stock, &c., &c., all contain most valuable hints, and the more valuable at the time the work was issued.

Such is the merest abstract of the general contents of a volume from every page of which passages could be gleaned possessing both a meaning and an import. Along with the strictly agricultural details and inferences are to be found various suggestions and opinions, collateral and general, but not less worthy of perusal and study by the farmer.

That which is so patent and well understood to-day was far from being so at the beginning of the century. Men were content to work in the dark, and not unfrequently to prefer the darkness so long surrounding the farming world to the light of modern discovery or even reasonable suggestion. Experiments were rarely tried—seeing that experimental inquiry was looked upon as an innovation that could hardly be tolerated,—and those made were conducted in so imperfect and slovenly a manner as to be unworthy the confidence of the general public. Preconceived opinion held the balance, and the weights and scales

were made to tally with it; so much easier is it to lend the eye to what is wished than to mete out accuracy of observation. It is given to few to deliberate, to search, and to reason on facts; whilst the general multitude rush at conclusions as if they had arguments in favour as plentiful as blackberries.

Many of Curwen's views set forth in the preceding pages are now to be looked upon as well-established facts in husbandry, and it may occur to some readers to think themselves wise enough in their own generation without any historical teaching: let it be remembered, however, on the principle that merit should be given to whom it is due, that the farming knowledge in these northern counties owes more to Curwen's experiments and teaching than to any other cause or circumstance.

CHAPTER XII.

The Carlisle Election of 1812—Mr. Curwen retires. His Visit to Ireland, and Letters thereon—published in Two Volumes. The general Purport of his Work. His Statesmanlike Observations—Catholic and enlarged Views—often Prophetic.

THE dissolution of Parliament in 1812 again brought Mr. Curwen to Carlisle, where he found two opponents—Sir J. Graham, of Edmond Castle, the Earl of Lonsdale's professional agent, and Mr. H. Fawcett. To his surprise, a portion of the electoral body was dissatisfied with his vote and opposition to a Bill that had been introduced to the House of Commons for seizing upon Scottish and Irish paupers, and casting them destitute upon their respective counties. Relying for support on his long services, and an honest discharge of his trust, and the additional claim of never being "allured by personal or selfish motives to sacrifice public interests to his own advantage," Mr. Curwen commenced his canvass; but finding some of the electors rather lukewarm, and that the "Yellows" had made large political capital out of the "pauper Bill," and some gossiping reports of a personal nature, withdrew from the canvass and abandoned the contest. His friends were the more disappointed at this step as they had been sanguine

as to his success. His resignation was announced in a manly and spirited address, one sentence of which may be quoted:—"In retiring to private life, I feel the proud satisfaction that whilst my friends do justice to the independency which has marked my public conduct, I defy those most politically hostile to me to point out one instance wherein I have been the abettor of corruption, or used the influence derived from you to benefit or advantage a single relative or friend."

Having withdrawn from party and political strife, Mr. Curwen was now at liberty to follow the bent of his own wishes; he therefore resumed his farming pursuits with increased energy, and endeavoured to make the Workington Agricultural Society more and more attractive. In 1813, when there was an unusually large meeting of yeomanry and others assembled in the Hall, he said, "Many centuries have these walls stood, but I will venture to say that never were they more highly honoured than on the present occasion; for, as there is no character in society more useful, neither is there any more respectable than the British farmer."

"OBSERVATIONS ON THE STATE OF IRELAND."

In the hope of knowing something more of the state of affairs in Ireland than he could obtain from books, newspapers, and correspondence, he planned a journey through the south of Scotland, and by Portpatrick to the sister Isle. This journey was undertaken in the autumn of 1813, and each day as he went along he recorded his observations in a letter home to Mrs. Curwen, so that there is always fresh-

ness of detail in his description of what he saw in his Irish tour that adds materially to the worth of his opinions. These letters, though meant as pencillings by the way, were so strongly prized by his friends, that he was induced to publish the series in two octavo volumes, entitled "Observations on the State of Ireland, principally directed to its Agriculture and Rural Population." Mrs. Curwen, who had a facile pen, lent her husband considerable aid in preparing the volumes for the press. She took great interest in the work, as she did in everything that concerned her much-loved husband.

His first letter, dated Wigton, August 11th, and in all probability written by the Rev. R. Matthew's fireside, would indicate that he did not regret his retirement from parliament, as he speaks of "the unavailing mortifications and unprofitable expense attendant on twenty-eight years of public life, his consolation in having escaped even the imputation of participating in the corruption of the times, and of his having done what he could to resist the adoption of those measures which for so many years inundated Europe with torrents of affliction and oceans of blood."

In furnishing a diary of passing events to his wife, he was merely pursuing his ordinary habits. "For years," he writes, "my head never reached its pillow without having previously registered the transactions of the day, with observations on what and whom I had seen;" and that he had been led by Lord Kames to adopt the practice as "our best and surest road to knowledge was by profiting from the labours of others, and making their experience our own."

How much it is to be regretted that these daily observations of Curwen's have been lost to the world. What an epitome of the current events of the day, and what an abstract of opinions, both personal and general, during a most remarkable epoch in English history would his diary have furnished!

He mentions the fact of 6,000 acres of waste land surrounding Wigton as having been enclosed, and that within the ten years preceding 1813 not less than 200,000 acres had been, or were being, brought into cultivation in the county of Cumberland. In his letter from Merton Hall (Wigtonshire) he writes: "Agriculture in Scotland has arrived at its present perfection by its being pursued on scientific principles, under the direction of intelligent persons whose education entitles them to think, and whose confidence in well-tried experiments teaches them to act for themselves, while the generality of farmers in most parts of England are bigoted to the errors of their predecessors, and are, from ignorance and prejudice, fearful and disinclined to abandon the overbeaten track of mismanagement." Here, as in other parts of Scotland, Curwen was received with a hearty greeting, and the warm hospitality showered upon him by the Lowland Scotch marked their high approbation of his agricultural character. He saw less cleanliness, both as to the person and the domesticity of the people in general, on the north side of the Solway than in his own country. Whilst recognizing the practical and the useful on his journey of observation, he derived no small amount of amusement in watching the traits of national character displayed by the Scotch. On a Sunday morning, whilst detained

at an inn, he asked for the loan of a book, and had the Bible and a large folio on heraldry offered him. "Sandie" seeing Mr. Curwen's surprise at the work on heraldry, observed in a tone of exultation "that he himsel was a Gordon—aye, a Gordon!" As he was about to cross the Channel at Portpatrick, he writes to his dear wife: "I have only time to add that, in petitioning Heaven for a fair wind and a smooth sea, I do not forget to include health, with happiness and sunshine for you. Adieu."

On reaching Ireland he speaks of his general opposition to Pitt, but that in reference to the union of Ireland with Great Britain he was a firm supporter of Pitt's policy. He was nearly three months from home, and saw the greater part of Ireland; examining everything by the way that could possibly illustrate the agricultural, the political, and social relations of the people. The geology, mines, bogs, rivers, fisheries, factories, population, prisons, &c., engaged his attention; in short, nothing worthy of note seems to have escaped his scrutiny and comment. He was the guest of the rich and the middle class—representing all the varied interests in the State. He also associated with all sorts of Irishmen; visiting with equal zest the cotter's cabin, the public hotel, and the mansion of the lordly titled. His name was well known in agricultural districts, and this gave him the opportunity of exchanging ideas with some of the best writers and thinkers in Ireland. Much credit is due to Curwen for the character and tone of his observations and the shrewd sense and moderation marking his general opinions. His letters far surpass any "Blue Book" that could have been gòt up by

Government employés, or "our own Commissioner," as they are written by a man who had no preconceived opinions to uphold and no political patron to please. Moreover, they convey the natural feelings of a patient observer, practical agriculturist, and able politician. He saw the great errors in the social status of Ireland, the need of trade and manufactures for the promotion of national wealth, instead of the populous masses trusting to the cultivation of the potato, which tended only to increase of numbers and the deterioration of both the physical and moral state of the people. Curwen's views of the potato and its influences were remarkable for their prophetic accuracy. He believed that while the potato alone continued to be the food of the great bulk of the people their numbers would be doubled in thirty years, and the wretchedness of the country proportionately increased. His anticipations went still further; for, in speaking of the small occupations and mode of paying rent as a hydra-headed evil fraught with consequences of a most calamitous nature, he adds, "Among these must be reckoned the famine inseparable from a failure in the potato-crop." Had he lived till 1846 he would have seen the fulfilment of his prophecy. One of the greatest political alterations, he imagined, that could take place would be a dislike to the potatoes and a general preference for bread and animal food. Though a great potato-grower in early life, and looking upon the tuber as a real blessing to our species, he saw the detriment to mental vigour and character likely to arise when it furnished exclusively the food upon which a community rested its existence. Therefore

he deprecated its becoming the staple article of food for the lower classes in Great Britain, lest similar results to those he witnessed in Ireland should follow.

Seeing that fifteen Irishmen could be maintained by the produce of the same extent of land required for the support of an English manufacturer, he was afraid that the continuance of the cotter system would end in a population likely to exceed all capital and means of occupation at home. In visiting the cotters' families Curwen's feelings were much touched with the poverty, the monotonous food, the patience, and long-sufferings of the people; and his comments on such a state of things implied a breadth of feeling, and no small knowledge of the statesman-like qualities required to remedy them.

His liberal-mindedness is everywhere manifest in acknowledging the equality of the two populations, Catholic and Protestant, *qua* their civil rights; in noting the chastity of the single and the fidelity of the married women; in condemning the bigotry of the Orange party, and not less the ignorance of the Papal. His experience told him much of the Irish labourer, and he had seen the advantage of a Catholic chapel at Workington, in establishing order and correct behaviour where for many years previously the reverse held good. He was not prepossessed in favour of the Methodists, the great antagonists of the Catholics, and attributed the spread of Wesleyanism to the insufficient accommodation offered by the Established Church, and this led him to suggest free pews to the lower orders. He heard and saw much that reminded him of the Irish Rebellion, and in one of his letters concluded by saying, "No people are more sensible

of kindnesses bestowed, none more warm-hearted, brave, and generous, or more alive to neighbourly or domestic feeling. Are not such people an honour to the State? Do they not claim its commiseration? . . . Enlighten by instruction, admonish with consideration and temper, and they may be led by gratitude and affection; but force and oppression, though persevered in for centuries, have not been able either to subdue their spirit or control their conduct."

Mr. Curwen spent some days with the Edgeworth family, and was charmed with them and all their belongings. His allusion to their hospitality and kindness, and the services rendered by the family to literature and Irish philanthropy, is done with great propriety. It is the more agreeable to note this, as old Mr. Edgeworth was viewed by some of his contemporaries as an intolerable bore; so much so that Lord Byron, in the rage for societies that prevailed in his time, proposed a "Society for the Suppression of Edgeworth."

Mr. Curwen's letters are replete with information and good sense. They embrace general outlines of the state of agriculture,—acreage, arable and non-arable land, farm conditions, tillage, stock, produce, &c.,—as contrasted with Cumberland and other parts of Great Britain. He gave considerable attention to the state of the labouring class, the schools, churches, morals, and daily life of the "finest pisantry in the world." In short, everything bearing upon the social status and political economy of the people seems to have been carefully weighed by him in his travels. He was not insensible to the faults inherent in the race,—the antagonism of classes and of Churches, the

absenteeism of the great landowners and their neglect of the public interests, and not less the apathy and love of ease among the lower orders. He saw with painful feelings the most fertile portion of the British Isles half ruined and half wasted in point of cultivation,—a miserable and discontented population, with improvidence their moral fault, and the potato their aliment, and a kind of organic evil. With all his love and admiration for Cumberland, Curwen longed for a transfer of the fine alluvial land from the vale of the Shannon to the banks of the Derwent near Workington Hall. White crop after crop for years in succession, without management, could never be realized in the field of his home labours. No wonder he was struck with the wonderful fertility of Ireland, and longed to see more capital and enterprise bestowed upon its farming.

He viewed the interests of Great Britain and Ireland as alike, and a combination of minds and interests, and the homely principle of fair dealing, as indispensable for the peace and prosperity of both. "Every wound which false policy had inflicted on Ireland," he remarked, "had proved a gangrene in the side of Great Britain." No sounder opinions were ever expressed, and their truism has been often re-echoed in Parliament, from Curwen's time down to the last session in which the great Sir Robert Peel took part in the affairs of the country. Curwen would have rejoiced if the imaginary island of Sir Thomas More's—*sola insula velut una familia*—could have been verified in Ireland; but party strifes and Celtic hate proved how Utopian would be the expectation of seeing family union, homogeneity of action, or har-

mony amongst the Irish. In Curwen's time, coercion prevailed on the side of the British Government towards Ireland, and, as Tom Moore appropriately said, "bayonets and hemp are not good stimulants to love in peoples;" and hence, it may be presumed, much of the hatred to the Saxon arose in the mind of the non-reticent Celt.

Nothing escaped Curwen's vigilant eye and observation, and he discussed, in various chapters, raths, round towers, cottiers' cabins; the dress, food, and feelings of the peasantry; the stock, produce, and cultivation of the soil; and everything that could lend interest to his narrative. In reference to the people, he saw little beauty in the Irish women, and found special fault with their lower limbs. Speaking of cows—milch-cows in particular—he was not able to see any of the white sort spoken of by Giraldus Cambrensis; but he had information to the effect that the people of Mayo used to thatch the backs of their milch-cows, to protect them against wet and cold, having no hovels under which to afford them shelter. It was in the same county (Mayo) that Arthur Young saw the plough worked by being attached to the horses' tails, in defiance of an Act of Parliament to the contrary.

Full of utilitarianism on matters touching the landed interest, Curwen, looking upon the imperfect implements in use and poor cultivation of Ireland, thought it would be a prouder distinction to introduce the Scottish cart and English spade to the industrious husbandmen of an extensive district than, by the ingenuity and agency of others, to erect the finest Gothic structure in the empire.

He was strongly in favour of Catholic Emancipation, and his arguments, placed on record in 1813, were as clear and emphatic as any that were expressed from that day to the carrying of the Relief Bill in 1829. His opinions on endowing the Catholics were thirty years in advance, or in anticipation, of Sir Robert Peel's measures, or rather Sir James Graham's, relating to Maynooth and the higher education of the Catholic priesthood. Mr. Curwen approved of his friend, Dr. Law (Bishop of Elphin), who used to observe, that as he had no chance of making Protestants of the people in his diocese, "I will do all I can to make them good Catholics;"—words which Curwen considered worthy of being recorded in the heart of every Protestant clergyman. He was strongly in favour of a commutation of tithes, for both the spiritual and temporal interests of the clergy, and, above all other considerations, for the peace and Christian feelings of the people. He was also of opinion that it would have been as conducive to the happiness and prosperity of Ireland, as well as beneficial to Great Britain, had Catholicism been permitted to remain the established persuasion of that country, seeing that the vast majority were Catholics; at any rate, that the country could not have been in a worse state of ignorance and misery than it is under the English episcopacy. Here, again, Curwen expressed sentiments very *ultra* for the period (1813), but which are gaining ground with many thinking minds of the present day; and as he suggested good educational training for the Catholics, which the two greatest leaders of a Conservative Government (Peel and Graham) got established, it is not so improbable that

his more advanced views of a Catholic Church being rendered dominant, or the Established one in Ireland, may find a Gladstone or a Stanley to carry them into effect, and so absolve the British Government, even in the eyes of continental nations, for all the misrule of the past.

Few men could see with a clearer eye than Curwen the many advantages which Ireland possessed in the fertility of her soil, her climate, her rivers, and sea-ports; nor was he untouched in sentiment by the picturesque beauty of the country—here and there so grand and imposing—and the delightful verdure and luxuriant corn-crops. He thoroughly appreciated the urbanity of the Irish, and his heart bled to see the sad political blunders of rulers; the bigotry, ignorance, and abasement of a vast population. His two volumes were calculated to enlighten and instruct the public mind on a country that had always embarrassed kings and ministers more or less; and it would have been well if they had received more attention from the press as well as the British Parliament, as their pages exhibit the painstaking observations of a man who not only could portray the condition, the ills, and woes of Ireland, but who, as if endowed with prophetic power, pointed out some of the remedies that were to establish comparative peace and prosperity to that unhappy country.

In approaching the Lakes of Killarney, Mr. Curwen's home feelings became subjected to a severe trial. Thus he writes to his wife:—"I could not hide from my own heart, nor will I disguise it from you, how much I apprehended lest I should now be compelled to acknowledge there was a spot on the surface

of this habitable globe more enchanting than Windermere." These are touching words; but he seems to have gained his equanimity, and retained his Windermere love as strongly as ever, as he concludes his letter by saying, "I am already convinced that the pre-eminent features of Killarney are so opposite and distinct from those of our lakes, that were the picturesque to be contested, the decision would be independent of comparative merits, and would arise out of the preconceived notions in the party in favour of the sublimity and grandeur, or of the beautiful and smiling works, of nature."

Looking at Curwen's manner, his emphatic and direct pronunciation on matters of fact, few were aware of his good, nay, refined tastes; for like many others before and since his time, he was not fully comprehended in Cumberland, where special feeling is seldom recognized, and as seldom appreciated. Curwen, however, delighted in the natural as well as the artistic, and seems to have been highly pleased with various parts of Ireland, and not the least in the vicinity of Ballyshannon.

In one of his letters he compares the fascinations of Claude with the romantic conceptions of Salvator Rosa, to show that the charms of both will be decided by the influence of a preconceived intellectual discernment. "The sublime gives birth to grand, to lofty ideas; whilst beauty produces less elevated though not less pleasing sensations. . . . . As a landscape for casual contemplation, I should prefer Killarney; as a permanent residence, I should choose Windermere." To show his powers of description, the following maybe quoted:—"Mont Blanc and its fellow

Alps, though in height and magnitude infinitely surpassing M'Gilly Cuddy's Reeks, are in sublimity greatly inferior. This superiority I conceive to arise out of the magic powers of light and shade. The brilliancy of Mont Blanc, by the refraction of the rays of light from its snow-clad, silvery sides, is ever bedecked in smiling gaiety; while the dark, solemn, and rich tints of purple heather crown M'Gilly Cuddy's Reeks with deep, gloomy melancholy."

Curwen knew that, to paint faithfully, a correct eye, strong powers of discrimination, and fidelity of feeling were requisite, and that the union of such qualities was rare; but in his depiction of Ireland he proved his powers to set forth the men, the manners, and the country, in honest colours, yet more when he wisely said, "To attempt the production of a likeness which would please more than one party in Ireland, I believe to be utterly impossible."

CHAPTER XIII.

Curwen's last Agricultural Reports. Election at Carlisle in 1816—*His Victory and Defence at the Hustings—His Welcome to Workington. Parliamentary Doings. Ascension Day Dinner to Mr. Curwen at Carlisle. The Thanks of the Yorkshire Manufacturers. Election of* 1818 *for Carlisle and Cumberland. The Salt Duties. The Elections of* 1820. *Mr. Curwen twice victorious.*

BETWEEN his withdrawal from Carlisle in 1813, and renewing his relations with the said city in 1816, his mind was more than usually free for rural pursuits,—the greatest enjoyment of his life. Probably it was at this period of his career that he meditated a final retirement from public engagements external to the county, and giving his whole attention to his farm. Looking upon the materials for the purpose as scanty, he did not issue an Agricultural Report in 1813, but in deference to the opinions of others, returned to his old practice in 1814, when both years were included in one cover,—the old buff, with its rough engraving of a field of standing corn overshadowed by a wide-spreading yet stately oak, and happily mottoed, "The Prosperity and Security of Great Britain." This report, dated November 18, 1814, was the last published by Mr. Curwen, and was more of the character of a general *résumé* of his past experiences than any of the preceding series. The premiums awarded in 1814 seem

to have been of the most varied kind, pertaining to stock-farms, draining, &c., and, as further encouragement, prizes for shepherds, schoolmasters, girl-teachers, and women milk-sellers. In taking a survey of the Society's influence, and the progress made in Cumberland husbandry, a simple statement of facts could not fail to appear self-congratulatory to the ever active President and his able supporters. The writer would gladly quote from this and the preceding reports, but the limits assigned to this biography will not allow.

Curwen's last words to the Society, in 1814, were: "The resources of the empire are great, and if economically employed, adequate to our exigencies. Happy and fortunate will it be if riches and prosperity be sought for, not in extended dominion, empty titles, and foreign colonies, but in the improvement of our internal resources." Appended to these reports is a pamphlet of sixteen pages, entitled, "Cursory Observations on the Corn Laws, submitted to the Consideration of the Workington Agricultural Society by the President," in which he expressed the general sentiments of the landed interest on the subject, but here and there threw out original suggestions as to the need of statistical information and further knowledge of continental corn-growing districts.

Owing to the death of Mr. H. Fawcett, on the 16th February, 1816, a vacancy was created in the representation of Carlisle. The Blues of the city immediately took action, and at a meeting presided over by Mr. Edward Rowland, determined to recall their old champion from Workington Hall. Mr. Blamire, of Thackwood, had been asked to attend the meeting,

and to him was intrusted the invitation from the chiefs of the Blue party to his uncle Curwen. Mr. Blamire was astir early the following morning to see Mr. Curwen on income-tax matters at Cockermouth, and to apprise him of the wishes of his old constituents at Carlisle—gladdening his uncle's heart by assuring him of the strong reactionary feeling in his favour. There was no hesitation on Mr. Curwen's part, and there was no time lost; for, taking "the instant by the forward top," he and his nephew mounted their horses and rode to Wigton Hall to see the Rev. R. Matthews—completing the sixteen miles' journey there in one hundred minutes. This was hard riding for a man of Curwen's age—sixty years old,—over roads so wet and bad and dirty that change of dress was essential before they could attempt to show their faces to the Carlisle electors. Whilst the splashed garments were removed (Curwen having taken off his boots, could not get them on again), and a consultation held with Mr. Matthews, the Mentor of the Whigs, a carriage drawn by four horses came to Wigton Hall door, and took Curwen and party at galloping pace to Carlisle. They were met two miles from the city by 450 electors and others, and on approaching the suburbs, so great was the concourse of people assembled that the streets became blocked up; and as the enthusiasm of the multitude far overmatched its numbers, the horses were unharnessed and their places occupied by artisans, whose wives surrounded the *cortége*, and proved their unbounded admiration of the hero of the West. Before the carriage reached the hotel, nothing would satisfy the populace but carrying Mr. Curwen "shoulder high,"

and in the scramble for the honour, and in the midst of much jostling to and fro, he lost from his feet the slippers lent him by Mr. Matthews, and nearly all his coat but its sleeves: even the buttons as well as fibres of his raiment were considered prizes to the possessors,—mostly freemen and their wives, who were alike maddened with joy at "Old Curwen's" return, and wished for a bit of his blue coat to be treasured up with the most valued of family relics.

On the day of Mr. Curwen's entry, Mr. Rowland Stephenson, of London, appeared as an opposition candidate. Mr. Stephenson was not long in showing "the white feather," to the great annoyance of his party, who had made up their minds to defeat Mr. Curwen "by hook or by crook," and were not prepared to succumb on account of their runaway candidate. Accordingly, the Yellows, represented by Dean Milner, Prebend Goodenough, and Harry Pearson, the attorney, visited Lady Musgrave, at Eden Hall, and persuaded her to allow her son Sir Philip, then from home, to be nominated at Carlisle. Up to this period the Musgraves had been looked upon as Blues, and possibly this belief led Major Yates (afterwards Aglionby, and M.P. for Cumberland), Mr. Blamire, and Mr. Christian, to ride over to Eden Hall to explain to the Lady that her son would have no chance in the contest with Mr. Curwen. This advice was not taken, the election proceeded, and after seven days' polling Mr. Curwen was declared the conqueror by a majority of *eighty-six* votes; and in spite, writes the weekly chronicler, "of every effort of falsity and malignity, and even of brute force, conjoined with all the artillery of the Church militant, hosts of magis-

trates, placemen, and place-hunters, to bear down the cause of independence." The election was severely fought. As the Yellows had kept their voters well together since Mr. Curwen's retirement in 1813, it became necessary on the part of the Blues to institute an active canvass if they meant to carry the election without calling in the "outsiders," or far-distant freemen. Mr. Curwen was unusually energetic, and, like a bold sportsman, poached upon the Yellow preserves for many an extra shot. His great hit was made on starting a covey of eight—a father and seven sons, "all rank Yellows,"—which he bagged one forenoon. This lot of voters counted sixteen in his favour. The decoy used by Curwen was supposed to be the mother bird; but whether the agency was birdlime or soft-sawder, this successful snaring was the town's talk, and yet continues to be cited as a masterpiece in the history of a man whose canvassing powers were almost unrivalled, and assuredly never surpassed if a feminine influence formed part of the political strategy. Mr. Curwen at the conclusion of the contest complained, as well he might, of the conduct of two magistrates—Dr. Heysham and the Rev. Dr. Lowry—who had permitted a felon to be brought out of gaol to vote for his opponent.

Lady Musgrave figured in the canvass, and seemed one of the most spirited of her son's party, visiting the guilds and the committee-rooms, and everywhere displaying both tact and energy. An unusual amount of malicious dirt was thrown at Curwen by the leading supporters of Sir P. Musgrave. Mr. Forster, a banker of the would-be-virtuous sort, whose name recalls the saddest of banking histories in Cumberland, accused

Mr. Curwen, on the first day of the poll, and in the presence of the crowd, of "possessing an iron heart, insensible to the calls of humanity." These were pretty galling words, and meant to be venomous and hurtful. Instead of being overcome by this fierce onslaught on his character, Curwen rejoiced at the opportunity of defending himself. Indeed, the enemy were unwittingly playing into his hands by affording him a golden chance of saying more to his own credit than he had ever done before, either publicly or privately. It was disagreeable for him to speak of himself, but being forced to do so, he said that inattention to the wants of the poor could never be charged to him whose hand in their relief was always open as daylight; that at the time of the great scarcity and dearth of corn he expended £3,000 on the poor, in buying corn and selling it out again at a very reduced price; that at the time of the riots at Carlisle, and the weavers were in distress, he sent one hundred guineas for their relief. "In the long list of charges against him was one that he did not support the schools,—that poor children, for what he cared to the contrary, might go without education! Those present would be judges how far this was true, when he told them that at Workington he had one of the largest schools in the kingdom, in which he educated daily, at his own expense, 300 children, and the school was open to all who chose to come. At Harrington he had a school for 200 children. All were educated at his expense, and no distinction was made as to religious persuasions. They were taught the Gospel in its pure state; the interpretation he left to themselves, for this he considered a matter of conscience; and he

contended that every one had a right to choose his own creed. So much, then, for his being uncharitable —an enemy to education—so much for his *iron heart.* . . . . He denied the charge of being an admirer of Bonaparte. On the contrary, he always beheld his unprincipled career with detestation. He execrated his injustice and ambition."

Curwen's reception at Workington, on his return from this election, seems to have been of a most lively kind, as, on the 12th March, sixty gentlemen mounted on horseback, and thousands of pedestrians, with bands of music and blue flags, met him on the road west of Maryport, and displayed unbounded enthusiasm. Even a large company of ladies, with Mrs. Curwen at their head, took part in the happy demonstration.

In February, 1818, Curwen addressed the House of Commons on the state of the revenue, and showed great familiarity with figures and the general bearings of the question, but, like other members of the Opposition, could not move the Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer. He also called attention to the Poor Laws and Assessed Taxes.

A few days later he introduced a Bill to amend the laws relating to tithes, the object of which was to prevent litigation, to lessen the animosities towards the Church, and to maintain the vested rights which the Government from time to time had been disposed to usurp. His speech embraced an historical sketch of tithes from Richard the Second's time and previous reigns. The object of Curwen's Tithe Bill was not to deprive the clergy or the lay impropriator of any tithes they were justly entitled to, but

to reform the law which had for many years enabled the holders of tithe to subvert moduses, compositions, and exemptions from tithes, and to subject the lands to the payment of tithes which were justly entitled to exemption. Curwen, it was believed, knew more about the tithe question than any lay member in Parliament. It is more than probable that he would discuss this matter of tithes with his nephew, William Blamire, and indoctrinate him with his views. If so, he contributed more to the settlement of the tithe question than by his addresses to the House of Commons, where everything was put aside that did not affect party votes or call for party declaration. It required nearly thirty years to ripen Mr. Curwen's views, and by that time he was gone to the grave, and his nephew had been elevated to the post of Chief Tithe Commissioner of England and Wales.

Ascension Day of 1818 witnessed a great gathering of influential people at Carlisle to do honour to Mr. Curwen by giving him a public dinner. Unfortunately, he could not leave his parliamentary duties, so he had to depute his son Henry to represent him at this hearty and enthusiastic demonstration of the principal gentlemen of the county and nearly all the citizens of Carlisle. Mr. Dykes, of Dovenby Hall, the chairman, speaking of the versatility of talent of their absent friend, and of his greatness in other directions than the agricultural, told the meeting that Mr. Curwen was looked up to, and frequently consulted, as a parliamentary leader, by the great manufacturing firms of Lancashire and Yorkshire. He dwelt upon Mr. Curwen's efforts to settle the tithe question, to modify the income tax, and to

obtain a repeal of the salt duties, as entitling him to the warmest gratitude of the people of England. Mr. Saul, of Green Row, the schoolmaster, honest-minded politician, and Quaker, said, in reply to his own health being drunk, that "he cared nothing for party:

> "'Good heavens forbid that we should blast their glory,
> Who know how like Whig Ministers are to Tory.'

Had Mr. Curwen been actuated by mere party spirit, none of us would have followed him the length of our spur-leathers. . . . . We came here as independent men to pay our quota of approbation to an honest member of Parliament."

In corroboration of Mr. Dykes' statement, it should be noted that this spring (1818) the Woollen Clothiers of the West Riding of Yorkshire conveyed, through the chairman of their meeting or association, a vote of thanks to Mr. Curwen "for his enlightened and patriotic opposition" to certain measures affecting their interests. This cordial vote of thanks was pleasantly acknowledged by Curwen, who wrote: "I consider I can never so effectually serve the interests of agriculture as by fostering and promoting the manufactures of the empire."

On the 15th May, Curwen objected to a grant of £6,000 a year for the Duke of Kent, and said if the Royal Family were extravagant, they must suffer like other folk for their indulgence. His chief objection rested on the state of the public revenues, which would not permit of any more lavish expenditure; and concluded his speech thus: "I am from principle and from duty compelled to divide the House."

In June (1818), another dissolution of Parliament occurring, Curwen had to meet his Carlisle constituents, who welcomed him as heartily as in 1816; the freemen—

> "With the plebeians swarming at their heels,
> Go forth and fetch their conquering Cæsar in"

—drawing his carriage from the distant western suburbs into the city, and overpowering his feelings by their loud exultations and blissful epithets. Sir P. Musgrave did not appear; but Sir J. Graham, of Edmond Castle, came on the Tory interest, and Mr. Perkins as a Whig. The first day's polling showed that Mr. Perkins was not the man. Curwen, as usual, headed the poll. Whilst thanking the electors for his triumph, some one in the crowd cried out that one of Curwen's voters was a weaver only earning *7s. 6d.* a week, yet not a pauper. Curwen took good measure of this interruption by saying, "I suppose this is intended to carry an imputation that the weaver is either bribed or supported by me. The honest pride of independence does not seem to be reckoned upon. Let that individual listen whilst I solemnly appeal to God—I never, directly or indirectly, to my knowledge or belief, gave a shilling to purchase a vote. I preserved the franchises of the citizens of Carlisle from thraldom, but I never did an act to render them unworthy of exercising the noblest franchise of a Briton." These were noble sentiments nobly expressed; and bolder or braver words were never sent forth from the Carlisle hustings.

The more intimate friends of Mr. Curwen had long wished him to represent his native county in Parlia-

ment; and at the June election of this year (1818), after Mr. Lowther (Tory) and Lord Morpeth (Whig) had been nominated at Cockermouth, Mr. Saul, of Green Row, proposed Mr. Curwen, who obtained by far the largest show of hands. As a doubt arose whether Mr. Curwen, who had just been elected for Carlisle, would stand for the county, the proceedings were stayed till six o'clock in the evening, so that he might be consulted. Mr. Curwen declined the compliment, and next day issued an address thanking the electors for their kindness, and assigned as a reason for not contesting the county that Lord Morpeth wished to stand unconnected with anybody in the canvass. There is no doubt that Curwen would have been returned with great ease.

At the August meeting of the Workington Agricultural Society, which continued three days, Curwen spoke on the usual agricultural topics, and not a little on the political affairs that engrossed the attention of landowners and farmers. The rock-salt duty had been reduced to £10 per ton; but only eight tons had been sold, and five of these came to the Schoose farm! In 1818 it was lowered one-half, or to £5 per ton. He showed the great import of the reduction, and hoped for another decline, as he calculated the yearly benefit of the use of salt to sheep at sixpence per head in the prevention of disease and in the improvement of carcase and wool; and as he computed the sheep of the kingdom at thirty millions, this would be a benefit of £750,000. He took six millions and a half of cattle benefited by salt, at five shillings annually, as producing £1,625,000; and one million and a half of horses at ten shillings benefit, or

£750,000,—making an aggregate sum in favour of its use of £3,125,000. He pointed to the flock of South-downs as proof of the value of salt, and their sale at greatly improved prices. Out of 650 sheep and lambs, not one had been lost in five months. He gave horses and cattle four ounces a day, and to calves and young stock two to three ounces a day; and whilst viewing the application of salt as making inferior food available, he thought occasions might warrant its application to the stacking of hay. His views on salt found strong support in Sir John Sinclair, whose essay on the subject some years afterwards contained a great deal of Curwen's experience, as well as his views on the application of salt as a manure to arable lands and to fertilize poorer lands, as a remedy against smut, preserving seed from vermin, promoting vegetation, and improving the quality of hay,—rendering coarse food nourishing, preserving stock from disease, and improving their condition.

Farming was Curwen's hobby, and life in the fields his great delight. What can be more pleasing than the following notice of his harvesting in 1819, by a lady staying at the Hall. "Yesterday we saw Mr. Curwen in the midst of his reapers, 400 in number, and a great proportion of them boys and girls. It was the churn dinner; they danced on the green, and he gave ribands and silk handkerchiefs to the best dancers, and tobacco to the old people: he guided the whole, and a joyous and agreeable sight you would have thought it. Poor Mrs. Curwen was there in her carriage, and pleased and affected to tears by seeing so happy an assemblage."

In November of this year he advocated, through

the pages of the *Carlisle Journal*, the use of oxen in ploughing, and gave his reasons for doing so,—based on actual observations in other districts and on experimental trials at the Schoose. He again reverted to his arguments for a total repeal of the salt duties; and observed that every labourer in the kingdom paid *one twenty-sixth* part of his earnings upon the domestic use of salt,—the duty on common salt being then £30 per ton, whilst the opulent man did not pay more than a *five-hundredth* or a *thousandth* part on this indispensable necessary of life.

In March, 1819, Curwen addressed the House of Commons at great length on the Poor Laws; and asked for a repeal of the duties on salt, soap, leather, &c., to relieve the working classes. However obnoxious the Income Tax might be, as it gave Government the opportunity of spending instead of retrenching, he would prefer it to the depressed condition of industry. Mr. Curwen was chairman of a numerous meeting of "friends to the independence of Westmoreland," held at the City of London Tavern, to forward Mr. H. Brougham's parliamentary interest in the county; and at a meeting of the freeholders in Westmoreland, for the same purpose, spoke strongly in favour of a reform in Parliament.

The death of George the Third caused a dissolution of Parliament in February, 1820. The Carlisle Blues, on the 9th of March, invited Mr. James, of Barrock Lodge, to join Mr. Curwen against Sir J. Graham, of Edmond Castle; but the second day's poll showed this to be a losing game, the numbers being, Graham 246, Curwen 239, and James 146. Though elected for Carlisle, Mr. Curwen was proposed for the county

by Mr. Dykes and the Rev. Mr. Stanley; and Lord Morpeth (the Whig) having retired after the first day's polling, Curwen was now in possession of two seats. On the 20th March, Curwen thanked the county electors at Cockermouth, saying, "For thirty-five years I have sat in the House of Commons, and had many glorious struggles; but glorious as most of these struggles have been, they all vanish before the present. For thirty-five years I have had to contend against the whole aristocracy of Cumberland, and I have beaten them with the assistance of the people. For the fourteenth time I am about to receive the highest honour that can be bestowed upon an Englishman." He seemed more than usually delighted; and as if knowing that he would win the battle, had prepared his outer apparel in the highest style, wearing on the chairing occasion a blue silk sash, a gold-hilted sword, and gold spurs, like a "grand knight of the shire."

After the Cockermouth election it was necessary to fill up the vacancy at Carlisle. Mr. Curwen said he would resign the blue flag that he had had in his possession for thirty-five years, as member for the city, to the man on whom the freemen fixed their choice, and this happened to be Mr. James, of Barrock Lodge, then in high popularity with the Carlisle electors. A day was appointed for the purpose of transferring the banner of the city's independence, and Mr. Curwen carried it—"the old blue flag"—himself from Mr. Dobinson's to the Coffee-House Assembly Rooms; and in handing it over to Mr. James said: "Sir, in delivering this flag into your hands, I expect a pledge from you that you will, in

fair weather or in foul, fight under this standard of liberty. May you hold it as proudly as I have done, and in delivering it to you I give you my hand and heart, with all my interest for the support of it." It seems that during this ceremony a dead silence prevailed, and as the local chronicler has it, "Every heart throbbed as if to burst its habitation, every pulse beat quicker, every eye for the moment glistened," till at last one spontaneous burst of applause relieved the feelings of the crowded assemblage. That blue flag should be forthcoming to-day, as it is known to have been waved over the spirited band of Cumberland Blues, on the top of Crossfell, in 1852, rejoicing at their last gained victory; and should find a place in the Town Hall of Carlisle—not simply from being a political emblem, as it should have a much higher meaning; but as the ennobling memorial of the man Curwen, who single-handed and at a mighty sacrifice of peace, time, and money, saved the city's liberties by rescuing the citizens from disfranchisement in 1786 and 1790.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mrs. Curwen's Death (1820). *Agricultural Distress. Mr. Curwen gets the Duty off Farm Horses. The Holme Meeting in* 1821. *Mr. Curwen carries the Repeal of the Salt Duty against all temptations. The Ministers and their "Mouter." Duke of Atholl again. Mr. Curwen changes his Opinions on the Corn Laws. The Roman Catholic Relief Bill of* 1825.

THE early spring of 1820 witnessed Mr. Curwen's great triumph both in the city and county elections; and proved him to be the political idol of the electors of Cumberland. He had severed his connection with Carlisle, after a service of thirty-four years, and become what he should have been all along—one of the knights of the shire. His parting with his old constituents, his throwing off the political mantle, and placing it upon the shoulders of Mr. James, of Barrock Lodge, his touching appeal to that gentleman to maintain the integrity and defend the honour of the "old blue flag," were a grand finish to a long and laborious devotion to the interests of the city.

Mr. Curwen had hardly settled down at home after the high excitement of these public occasions, when Mrs. Curwen, who for some months had been declining in health, showed a marked change for the worse, and on or about the 18th of April died at Workington

Hall, in her fifty-sixth year. This event created a blank in society, and a greater blank at the Hall of the Curwens, that was never filled up by the bereaved husband. The agricultural meetings, though held as usual in the autumn, and for three years subsequently were never the same after Mrs. Curwen's death. The grand festivities at the Hall, in which the highest classes of both sexes joined so heartily, could no longer be offered. The frequenters of the show had their day's entertainment, and the pleasure of witnessing a concourse of people, and the agricultural display and accompaniments of the meeting; but the loss of Mrs. Curwen produced an altered feeling, an hiatus in the order of things that could not be counterbalanced by the ready amiabilities of the younger representatives of the family.

On Mr. Gooch's motion for a Committee of the House of Commons to inquire into the causes of agricultural distress, Mr. Curwen (on the 7th March, 1821) made a very able and argumentative speech. No man in the House was perhaps more familiar with the whole subject, and none so practically conversant with the depressed state of agriculture. Being looked to by the Whigs as the mouthpiece of the landed interest, Curwen seems to have risen with his subject to a great effort; his speech was marked by spirit and boldness, sparing neither the Ministry nor its supporters. He drew attention to the fact that the public debtor was being overlooked in the cry for safety to the public creditor; then the corn laws, general taxation, and other questions affecting land, the price of food, the labourer's distress, came under his general review, while he contrasted the national

interests of England with those of European countries. Such an address coming from a member so well known for his ability, honesty, and good sense, made an impression within the walls of Parliament, and got widely circulated in the form of an octavo pamphlet throughout the country. A few quotations will show the spirit of the address. "I beg, Sir, in the outset to declare that I ask for the agriculturist nothing that can by possibility prove injurious to any other class of the community. . . . The farmer cannot wish to oppress the manufacturer, who is his best customer, for in so doing he would act against his own interest. . . Enormous taxation is the real cause of the public distress; the taxes were grievous even in times of prosperity, but are totally ruinous in the present distressed state of the country. . . . I call upon the noble lord (Castlereagh), and those who act with him, as the only way to save the country, to follow a system of economy and retrenchment—not a saving of cheese-parings and candle-ends, but a real and comprehensive economy such as may yet restore to the people the comforts they have lost. All ranks of men have suffered, and almost all ranks of men complain; therefore if the House do not interfere in time, if they do not show more sympathy for the misfortunes of the people, they will be considered in the same light as the old nobles of France—opposed to the interests and happiness of their country.

"Sir, the House has, at this moment, a fearful responsibility resting upon it. A state of things is advancing similar to that which preceded the Revolution in France. The landed interest—the gentlemen and yeomanry of the country—they who were once

the organs of the opinions, and through whose influence the affections of the people were secured to the Government, are rapidly falling in fortune; and this influence will soon be annihilated. Between the Crown and the people there will be but one link, as was formerly the case in France; and the liberty of the country will expire when its natural defenders are no more. . . . We have heard of Radicals; but who may be said to be a prince of Radicals but the noble lord, whose lavish expenditure and fatal counsels have brought these evils upon us—if they be not speedily averted. Gracious God, to what a deplorable state is this once happy country reduced! The rich prospect of abundance throughout the land—the promised bounty of Providence which was wont to gladden the eye and rejoice the heart, is now contemplated by Ministers at least with fear and dismay, and that which promotes the happiness of other nations they consider as destructive to their own. Such a state of things implies something rotten at the core. . . . Retrenchment must be adopted; the system of the noble lord must be abandoned; the expenditure of the country must be diminished; justice must be done; and those lavish grants given for no public services, or worse than none, must be discussed."

In the same month (March), Curwen moved for a repeal of the duty on draught horses solely employed in husbandry, but on this occasion failed to carry it. He also sought to impose a tax on funded property, on the legitimate ground that it should take its share of the public burdens. On the 5th April—the same day that the great county meeting of Cumberland

farmers was held at Wigton, where Sir James Graham, of Netherby, made so noble an appearance—Mr. Curwen again brought forward his motion to repeal the duty on agricultural horses, but was advised to postpone it. On the 13th June, he would wait no longer, knowing as he did that Government wished to give him the go-by, so argued that the tax on farm horses was really a tax on the plough, and that they might as well levy a duty on the tools of the artisan; that the tax was unequal, and applied most to poor soils, whilst it did not affect grazing lands. He had laboured six years to get rid of the tax, and meant to persevere; that each year there were about 130,000 surcharges, and that scarcely a farmer could escape them. He recalled the severity of the tax, and how difficult it would be to say that a saddle horse had not been once or twice with a plough. He then quoted with happy effect (as showing up the folly and great hardship of surcharges) the case of the poor woman with a fruit-tree growing at the end of her cottage for many years, her affection for it, and her having a gardener to prune it, for which pruning she paid him *sixpence*, and then being informed of by a spiteful neighbour, she was surcharged for "employing an occasional gardener," and part of her goods were actually sold to pay for the surcharge. This story aided the argument, and his fully expressed determination to follow up his attack so influenced the House that on a division he got 141 votes against 113, or a majority over Ministers of 28! The Government, as usual in that day, tried to shuffle Curwen out of his victory; but no; he had the second reading on the following night, and carried exemption of duty from both horses

and mules engaged in farming operations; thus his six years' fight ended in a triumph.

Though he had carried an important measure, he was not satisfied with the Parliamentary Session, and towards its close (June 18) addressed a long letter to the *Carlisle Journal* on the state of public affairs, and in no hopeful strain. Amongst a variety of topics, he complained of the great inequality of taxation, that the poor-rates amounted to eight millions and a half of money, and that not much short of one-third of the whole produce of the land was absorbed by poor-rates, tithes, and taxation.

On July 26th, the usual dinner given to Mr. Curwen by the Holme Agricultural Society came off at Skinburness, attended by 160 gentlemen—thus reviving, in a fashion, the old glories of the mediæval town, whose history extended to the earliest of the Roman occupations in the North; but, alas! now reduced to less than a dozen dwellings. He had been called the "Farmer's Friend," and he was proud of the title; and at the conclusion of one of his happy speeches asked the whole body to his *own* show at Workington, where they would see Sir John Sinclair —a great man in size, and great in talent and virtues. The invitation seems to have been accepted, as there was a large gathering at Curwen's board, and the show lasted three days. It was Sir John's third visit, and he spoke of the immense improvements he saw around Workington, which could only have been done by Mr. Curwen's visiting other counties. "From the Lothians he had learned the best mode of cultivating turnips; from Sussex he had introduced Southdown sheep; from Durham, short-horned cattle; but the

culture of potatoes and the management of his dairy was exclusively Curwen's own." He (Sir John) had been many years in Parliament, and had ever found his valued friend Mr. Curwen at his post ably vindicating the cause of the agriculturist. Of that respectable and useful class Curwen was the champion, and might be called "a field marshal in the armies of agriculture." Bravo, Sir John! This meeting—the sixteenth anniversary of the Society's annual shows, was a marked and cheering success that helped greatly to gladden the heart of "the old squire," now in his sixty-sixth year. His presidential address embraced the usual topics, and seemed to breathe the same energetic spirit. He spoke with satisfaction of sixty acres of turnips at the Schoose farm which no county in England could surpass.

In February and March, 1822, Mr. Curwen was again in the political arena, fighting as hard as ever against Government apathy and its neglect of the country's interests. For years he had called attention to the salt duties; and possibly with the view of allaying his opposition, the Executive Government had permitted him to use salt for agricultural experiments, free of duty: he never swerved, however, from his condemnation of this odious tax of £30 per ton. Mr. Curwen sought for its repeal on the general ground of the many applications of salt to domestic purposes, to the arts, and chemistry; as well as the special ground of its high value to the agriculturist. It was argued that in husbandry, if half the quantity of salt was consumed for the sheep and cattle of the country which Mr. Curwen had used with very great advantage, no less than 300,000 tons would be re-

quired; and that by reducing the duty to thirty shillings a ton, a revenue of £1,800,000 would be got—*one-fifth* more than the produce of the salt duties amounted to in 1811.

When Lord Castlereagh, at the head of the Government, sent for Mr. Curwen to the Treasury, and besought him to allow his motion for a repeal of the salt duty to stand over, and that the Government would, by instalments of reduction in the duties, gradually attain the same end as his sweeping "total repeal," Curwen would not yield to the voice of power, nor deviate a hair's breadth from the line of duty he had laid down for himself. He knew the wants of the country; he knew the intolerable tyranny of a taxation that involved the health and comforts of the people, especially the poor; he also knew the slippery materials of which Ministers and Governments were composed, and that he should repose no confidence in their promises. "Put not thy faith in princes," nor yet in parliamentary potentates. Curwen had heard the rhyme indicating that when the "devil was sick, the devil a saint *would* be," and of course promise any amount of good behaviour to get well again; but he (Curwen) was also aware that, if he withdrew his Bill, he would place Castlereagh in the position of his Satanic majesty, who, when he got well, "the devil a saint *was* he." No Ministerial smiles, not even the offer of a seat in the House of Lords—then considered a great honour to the highest Commoner, titled and hereditarily rich—could induce Curwen to shrink from the advocacy of a public principle, alike honest and true, and of vital import to the nation at large.

Driven by Curwen's repeated onslaughts, and their own small majorities getting beautifully less, the Government, in June of this year, recommended the reduction of the salt duty from *fifteen shillings* to *two shillings* per bushel. Curwen moved for its "total repeal," but lost his amendment by 104 votes against his 92. Nothing daunted, he resumed his opposition on the 2nd July, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer was at length driven to consent to a total repeal—to commence in eighteen months from that date; thus to the indefatigable exertions of Curwen is due the great merit of removing the highly obnoxious and detrimental tax on salt from the British tariff. Many others aided the good work, but in season and out of season Mr. Curwen kept knocking at the door of the Exchequer, and each year he knocked louder as the feeling out of doors became more embittered against this inhumane tax. Every householder rejoiced in the downfall of the duty; and every bit of bacon and dried beef became the more palatable to the consumer that its preservation could be honestly obtained free of Excise supervision. Curwen by securing the abolition of the tax conferred a great boon upon the nation, and for a time his services were remembered —indeed highly extolled by the press. Other counties would have rejoiced in having a man to represent them of the Curwen mark, and who could achieve victories in spite of Ministerial opposition, but Cumberland made no sign of recognition or gratitude towards the champion of their interests and the benefactor of the country at large.

In August (1822) Mr. Curwen attended the Holme agricultural meeting, and gave as his reasons for not

having his Workington meeting, the depressed state of affairs, and his dislike to declare his sentiments where it might be said no one would have the temerity to oppose him. Wearied as he had long been struggling on the Opposition benches, he spoke of the difficulties of private members in a Tory House of Commons. "Were," said he, "a Bill brought in by an angel from heaven, it would not pass the House without the sanction of the Ministers of the day." To illustrate the character of Parliament, he told with great humour the story of the miller who did not act fair by "*the batch*" [a sack of corn taken to the mill to be ground into flour], so the parish decided to change him for another—called an honest man. This second miller turned out no better than the first; for on being watched by the wisest man of the parish, he saw him take the *mouter** once, then a second time, and then a third time; upon which the wise man cried out, "Too bad;" and upbraided the miller whom the parish had taken to be an honest man amongst them. "Aye," replied the miller, "I was an honest man before I came here; but it's the mill—the mill that has made me dishonest." Assuredly, a third *mouter* required a strong excuse. "Just so," said Curwen, "would it be if there were new Ministers without a change in the system—they would still take to the *mouter* when they had the chance." After advising the meeting to petition Parliament, he said, "I am

* "The *Mouter*" is applied to a measure of corn taken by the miller as his payment for grinding "the *batch*"; it consists of a small wooden dish capable of holding *one-sixteenth* part of a peck, and this peck is a fourth of a Carlisle bushel, equal to three Winchester bushels. The country miller with whom the practice of *mouter* now remains is often joked with using his hands as well as the dish for *mouter*.

now sixty-six years of age; I have not long to live, therefore I may safely rebut any charge of selfishness in asking you to make your distresses known to the House of Commons. Ministers might take *mouter* twice in days of prosperity, but in days of adversity they should listen to the people."

On the 18th February, 1824, Mr. Curwen moved for papers relating to the Duke of Atholl's interference with the House of Keys (Isle of Man) on the criminal court of Tynwold for the general gaol delivery, and carried his motion by a majority of two votes. Mr. Secretary Peel admitted that Mr. Curwen was the only person in the Commons who knew anything of the matter, that he himself had been guided by the law officers of the Crown in advising the Duke to remove the judge, and added that he was actuated by no political bias in the matter, as he had appointed Mr. Curwen's son, Mr. Christian, to the vacant deemstership. Mr. Peel had honoured Curwen by conferring an important office upon his son, and honoured himself no less in passing over his own party to serve the interests of the Isle of Man. Mr. Curwen, it should be known, was a member of the House of Keys—the Manx Parliament; and perhaps the only man who may be said to have sat in two British Parliaments at one and the same time.

On the 31st March, Mr. Curwen sought for a return of the quantities of spirits permitted into the four northern counties of England, and at the same time animadverted strongly on the folly of a different duty for the two sides of a stream or hedge separating England from Scotland—of the smuggling, lawlessness, and other contingencies attendant upon the

system. It required thirty years more to prove Curwen's views to the British Government.

In presenting a petition from some London merchants praying for a repeal of the existing Corn Laws, and that foreign corn should be admitted on duty, Mr. Curwen said that he had hitherto been in favour of a Corn Bill and great restrictions, but the relaxation of the Navigation Laws, and the good effects obtained thereby, had staggered his views; and that he was now of opinion that restrictions were not calculated to guard the interests of those for whose benefit they were made, whilst they were attended with injury to the community at large. He felt bound to acknowledge his errors as an agriculturist and politician. The petition recommended a duty of 20*s.* on wheat, 10*s.* on barley, and 6*s.* on oats. In his time great changes of feeling had taken place, and he admitted that Parliament, in supporting the corn monopoly, had everybody against them but the recipients of land-rent. The press of the country was against them; and he recalled Sheridan's statement, made during the period of Bonaparte's greatest power, "Give but a free press, and unshackled communication of thought to France, and it would prove more than a match for him, and speedily overturn his tyranny." Mr. Huskisson congratulated Curwen on his change of opinions from monopoly to fixed duty. Curwen's speech was much discussed throughout the kingdom, from his being so well known as a great stickler for the Corn Laws; but the grounds for his change of views were set forth, and this admission of the fact was an additional proof of his honesty and boldness of purpose. In many matters, as well as in

this political march from inexperience and prejudice to sound principles of economy, Mr. Curwen was imitated by his distinguished pupil Sir James Graham.

On the 10th May, 1825, Mr. Curwen moved the third reading of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill, and, after a long debate, carried it by 248 votes against 227, or a majority of 21. Loud and long-continued cheers followed the announcement of this marked majority on so great a question of religious liberty. It was rejected by 48 votes in the Lords. Though Curwen did not live to see the Emancipation Act carried, he knew that religious intoleration in Britain had received its most decisive blow on that 10th of May. A majority of 21 in so large a House, and against a Tory Government, left no doubt as to the upshot of Curwen's motion; the first great knell of religious liberty had been sounded by a Cumberland squire, and time would secure the rest. How gratifying it would have been to Curwen's heart had he lived to see the principles of civil and religious liberty —Catholic Emancipation, Parliamentary Reform, and other measures for which he had struggled so ardently —become the acknowledged principles of a British Government, as they had long been the wish of the British people.

CHAPTER XV.

The Election of 1826. *Honours to Curwen—the "Eternal Obligations" of Carlisle. His Patriotism. Gives up Farming. Gold Medals to him. His Climacteric. Corn Laws. The St. Stephens' Drama. The Last of the Tribunes. Curwen's Death* (1828).

AS the elections of 1826 approached, there was an unusual amount of political fervour in the country, owing to the increased and daily increasing powers of public opinion in favour of reforms—civil and religious. The young scions of the Whig houses were on the alert for Parliamentary seats, as in the game of politics about to be played it was expected they would have better luck, and more trump-cards in hand than hitherto. Among others desirous of senatorial status, was Sir James Graham, Bart., of Netherby, who fancied, and rightly too, that there was something in him that might be made available to the party which his early predilections, contrary to paternal example, had led him to join.

Mr. Curwen had experienced two fainting fits in the Commons, and he was known to be seventy years of age; and probably owing to these facts, or possibly from the wish being father to the thought, a rumour got abroad that he was about to retire from Parliament. Sir James Graham seems to have had an offer from some quarter; but with an eye fixed on his

native county, he thought it well to ask Mr. Curwen if it was his "fixed determination to stand again for Cumberland." In another passage of his letter, dated Park Street, March 30th, 1826, he says, "I take the liberty of putting this question, with the most friendly feeling, for the purpose of avoiding any misunderstanding which the want of frank explanation might create;" and signed himself, "always with perfect truth, very faithfully yours." Mr. Curwen replied in the affirmative; for, like "an old stager," he liked the crack of the whip too well to cast aside his Parliamentary harness as long as he could keep his paces. In April Mr. Curwen had a solicitation from Sir James to allow Mr. H. Brougham to be nominated along with him for the county of Cumberland—no doubt in the hope that, as Curwen could secure a majority of votes, he might have a good chance of carrying Brougham "on his back"—to quote a phrase used by Sir James in 1831. Mr. Curwen dissuaded this step, for though he was prepared to help Brougham, he did not wish any greater responsibility. Curwen's letters would indicate that he dld not wish for an alliance with "Harry Brougham."

On the 16th June (1826) Mr. Curwen appeared on the Cockermouth hustings, where he was nominated for the county by the Rev. Henry Barwise, who had taken part in the election of 1768—so noted in the annals of Cumberland for the stand made against the Lowthers by Henry Curwen. Mr. Barwise praised Henry Curwen for his restoration of the independence of the Blues on that grand occasion, and then added, "Since that ever-glorious time of nearly sixty years ago, the Blues have been beaten, despised, and con-

temned." Of the candidate he was nominating in 1826, he said, "Mr. Curwen is descended from the founder of your liberties. He has long been a representative in Parliament, and not a blot has yet been shown to stain his Parliamentary conduct." Well done, reverend octogenarian! May the Parsons Barwise live for ever! This was Mr. Curwen's *fifteenth* and *last* appearance on the hustings, and like all other appearances of the kind—victorious. Whilst the county was paying Curwen honours, Sir James Graham, in his published address to the electors of Carlisle, and on objecting to Sir Philip Musgrave's candidateship for the city, said, "When he (Sir P. Musgrave) last appeared before you (1816), he came as the opponent of Mr. Curwen, to whom the freemen of Carlisle owe eternal obligations for his numerous struggles in the defence of their liberties."

It is lamentable to think that these eternal obligations to which Sir James so forcibly alluded are still owing to the memory of Curwen. The debt incurred by the citizens of Carlisle in 1786, and so largely increased in 1790, and that went on gradually augmenting with compound interest till the old Blue flag—the token of hard-earned liberties—was handed over by Curwen to his successor, Mr. James, in 1820, has never received any public acknowledgment. There were no *per cents.*, or even fractional *centimes*, paid towards the cumulative loan of Curwen—the public creditor; it stood as a huge debt in his lifetime; it stands now, in the year of grace 1867, and forty years after his death; its record is to be found in the weekly chronicles of the county, if it has escaped the memory of the men of Cumberland.

In these electioneering struggles Curwen had experienced much of a trying nature that affected both himself and his peace of mind; and that was not all, as a worse tax was levied upon his purse and his means—and for what? Not for a personal benefit, as he never gained a farthing by his political position; and though he had a large share of the honourable feeling that animates men of patriotic motives, it was not to gratify a mere personal ambition for a Parliamentary seat, as he vastly preferred rural life in Cumberland to the vitiated atmosphere of St. Stephen's; but for the maintenance of a cause in which his forefathers, Christian and Curwen, had always fought—the cause of right against wrong, and of freedom against intolerance. The cause instigating Mr. Curwen's efforts was the cause of the people of Carlisle against the crushing influences of a lord who aspired to feudal dominion, and more than feudal tyranny, in Cumberland, and sought his ends by means as baneful to true constitutional government as the usurpations of the old barons of England were inimical to the liberty of the subject. It was the people's liberties that brought Curwen (as it had done the brave Howard of Greystoke in 1780) into the field of politics, and the special rights of the enfranchised citizens of Carlisle that prompted him so strongly to continue the fight against the Lowthers; and the citizens and freemen of Carlisle, if true to themselves, should have laboured to the utmost to see Mr. Curwen "scot-free," instead of which they stood by with folded arms whilst he was saddled with the expense of thousands upon thousands, in addition

to his noble endeavours and many personal sacrifices on their behalf.

The June election of 1826 being over—probably recalling by its quiet contrast the terrible struggle that occurred in the same month thirty years previously—Mr. Curwen seems to have determined to abandon some of his farming operations at the Schoose. For two years there had been no meeting of the Workington Agricultural Society, and unless he could take an active part in its proceedings there was no likelihood of its being re-animated; so that the loss of this tie or annual stimulus, and the great drawbacks attendant on farming, made this determination appear less unexpected to his friends. Other circumstances influenced his decision still more; and these were,—first, his being thwarted so frequently in trying to uphold the agricultural interests in Parliament; and, secondly, his failing to perceive the existence of any public spirit amongst the farming class such as should have attended his counsels to the yeomanry of Cumberland. On the 8th August, 1826, he sold without reserve all his valuable stock of short-horns, and it was much to be regretted, at a great pecuniary sacrifice. Such stock as Mr. Curwen's would at the present day have realized great sums, and under any circumstances more favourable than the autumn of 1826 the animals would have brought good prices; as it was, the most valuable animals in Cumberland were dispersed at a fraction of their real value.

If the Schoose farm had lost its interest from this date with Curwen, the greater facts of the agricultural world had not. He still busied himself, both in and

out of Parliament, with inquiries pertaining to the subject that had engrossed his attention for nearly fifty years. In 1827 he wrote two long letters to Sir John Sinclair, in which he expressed his doubts as to the ability of the United Kingdom to supply itself with grain; and whilst the Cumberland squire was full of misgivings, the Scottish statist looked to a more hopeful state of things. As long as he could wield a pen or argue his points with the leading members of the Commons, his mind was ever alive to the necessities of the times and the promotion of the landed interests,—not, however, to the exclusion of the fair claims of either trade or commerce.

As early as 1807 the "Society of Arts, Commerce, and Manufactures," in London, voted their gold medal to Mr. Curwen for various improvements in agriculture. First, the use of carrots as a substitute for oats; secondly, for feeding cows during the winter season; and, thirdly, for an improved "drill horse hoe, or weed-harrow." This gold medal, followed by others from the same quarter, was only one among the many public recognitions made by this and other societies to Curwen for his experiments and practical discoveries in the art. Considering the great services that Mr. Curwen rendered the country at large by his experimental farming, and the frighful outlay of money in contending with the Lowthers, it would have been well for himself and all parties (excepting the Carlisle freemen, who without his interference would have been the helots of Lowther) if he had bestowed all his energies on the cultivation of the soil and the advancement of the landed prosperity of England.

The Reports of the Workington Agricultural Society originated entirely with Mr. Curwen, and for ten years constituted the best chronicle of the agricultural times. In giving an account of the progress of the art over a wide district of country, they became the exponents of good, and the best of guide-posts for the avoidance of bad farming. Nothing has been seen like them in England. Mr. Curwen stood alone as a teacher; in his school theory was illustrated by practice, and in his exhibitions or shows the humblest inquirer had the means of comparing verbal description with actual fact. No one who will be at the pains to read the history of agriculture up to the third decade of this century, or to converse with intelligent farmers of the old school in this county, will for a moment doubt that the husbandry of to-day in Cumberland is mainly based on the suggestions and example of John Christian Curwen. Accumulated experience, if that experience be well gathered, is the best promoter of agriculture; and if any one had been able to take up Curwen's mantle in 1826, particularly if he possessed the same liberality of feeling and the same powers of observing and recording facts, the improvement seen to-day would have been still more marked and significant.

With the ending of the Session of 1825, Mr. Curwen was entering his seventieth year,—the grand climacteric of humanity; but beyond experiencing two fainting-fits in the House of Commons, and more frequent returns of bilious disorder, he did not seem to yield to the threescore-and-ten influences. Some of his attacks, as may be opined from his character, and more directly from his letters, were hastened by

the worry of his farming schemes, and disappointment at the slow action of Government, and the slower progress made to remedy the evils affecting the body politic of England. With advancing years came more or less vexation of spirit—so natural to a man whose clear vision could see the goal, yet could not persuade others either to see, or to aim at it. He had urged reforms upon the House of Commons from the day he entered Parliament, when Pitt was in kingly power; and so many years had rolled over since that day, that some of the boys who saw or joined in the *cortége* of Pitt's funeral had risen to senatorial position, and become leading partners in the great Whig and Tory firms; yet Curwen was still at his post—still asking for reforms and the redress of public grievances—still urging the claims of agriculture and commerce, and the reduction of taxation.

Though Mr. Curwen attended part of the Parliamentary Sessions of 1826 and 1827, and continued to discuss the bearings of the Corn Laws with Mr. Canning and Mr. Huskisson, and to seek for information on subjects bearing upon the general question of food-supply, his days of hearty Parliamentary life were over. His public career, to do that noble career full justice, should close with the 10th May, 1825—the day on which his voice was heard so significantly in favour of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill—the day on which for the first time that Bill received the sanction of the House of Commons—a day so promising and so hopeful to the cause of true religious liberty in Britain.

Mr. Curwen had gained much in his time by a

dogged perseverance, and the honourable, free, and practical exposition of his views; and, considering his close adherence to the logic of facts, and his advocacy of honest legislation, should have gained much more had he been well backed by public opinion out of doors. His policy, even when less sound in its deductions, or possibly at fault, was always swayed by integrity and honourable principle —the greatest *desiderata* among public men. His name was for long associated with the Parliamentary supporters of a corn monopoly; but it would be an oversight in history, and no less an injustice to Curwen's character, to assume that he acted as a selfish proprietor thinking only of the land, and blind to the other component parts of the national integral, or the general prosperity of his country. Some men of his time preached and prayed for "entire protection" to British soil, and as loudly denounced the exponents of "free trade"; but Curwen, though strongly protectionist, always guarded himself, both in speech and writing, against the idea of being a rabid supporter of any private interest to the detriment of the general advantage. Whether addressing the Commons, where he subjected himself to hard hits from the Opposition, or sitting in the midst of country friends at the Holme agricultural meetings—all of whom sailed under the flag of Protection,—he never, in his loftiest advocacy of the well-doing of the farmer, forgot the partnered prosperity of the manufacturer. Whatever his bias may have been, he invariably wished to uphold a true political economy as the basis of a general and not less true prosperity in the land. He was too much a man of business to

be isolated in opinions, or perversely tied to one; moreover, he had large colliery undertakings on hand,—and of what avail were they without a thriving urban population, a flourishing trade, and an expansive commerce?

Looking upon the land as the basis of national wealth, and that in proportion to the smallness of the area of arable soil the greater the need of fostering its fertility, Curwen and others thought this could only be established by imposing heavy prohibitory duties on foreign produce. Adam Smith had written his "Wealth of Nations;" but the book does not seem to have been much read, or, if read, the need of pressing wants—almost of life itself—during the great French war, forbade the profitable study of political axioms. Let it be remembered that in Curwen's day England was beset with enemies, and for many years felt in awe of the arch-usurper of the Continent, and for a time stood as the solitary opponent of the Tilsit league—the Russian autocrat in alliance with the Napoleonic universalist; in other words, England stood alone against the world of arms; and it may be said of her proud spirit that she stood in as defiant an attitude as ever. In such a position of affairs, it need hardly be said, food, self-dependency, and life were the great things touching the heart of the nation; and it might well have been asked in that day of what use are political prophets compared with the preservation of humanity.

Mr. Curwen fought on one of the shadowy sides of political economy till 1825, when circumstances arose to open his eyes; and as part of the film fell off, he, like an honourable man, admitted the

error of his ways. As a cautious Whig, supported by a great body of merchants in London and elsewhere, he then advocated fixed duties; there was still a speck left on his political vision, which the majority of public men suffered from in a greater or less degree. Even those who lived twenty years longer—to 1845—had to submit to the Perronet Thompson and Cobden lotions before they were able to secure a transparent medium and true sight. Mr. Curwen's abandonment of the Corn Bill for a fixed duty shocked his farming friends throughout England; but his honest avowal of the change of opinion, with the reasons assigned, made him all the more respected by the leaders of parties. From letters placed in the hands of the writer as these sheets are passing through the press, it seems that during 1826 and 1827 Curwen was as busy as ever gathering information from his friend Mr. Benjamin Thompson, of Workington, as to the cost of tillage of land, the amount of burthens levied upon it, with varied special details as to urban proximity, or otherwise, of farms. He was still seeking for information, in the hope of indoctrinating others with the general bearings of the land question, and this he sought by other ways than Parliamentary talk.

For many long years he had been chagrined with the Shibboleth of parties, and the sham procedures of Parliament, and in 1826 gave vent to the views he had long entertained by comparing the doings of the Commons to a Christmas pantomime. To his sterling mind, how disappointing it must have been to witness the mode in which interests of magnitude were trifled with, and by the people's representatives; and the

not less shameful burlesque of having to appear grave as senatorial wisdom when the St. Stephen's drama was being played out for its hundred nights, and with no more tendency to substantial good than exciting the risible emotions of "the gods in the gallery." As Cicero commenced one of his orations against Catiline by the words "*Quousque tandem abutêre nostrâ patientiâ?*" so might Curwen have addressed the Commons of England, towards the termination of his arduous struggle for reforms, "How long will ye Parliamentary representatives abuse the confidence and vex the souls of our English people?"

Courageous and bold, and regardless of the overawing of Government, and the menace of men in power, Curwen was never deterred from a free utterance of opinion when both King and Court stood in the van of his condemnation, as of others who, like Curwen, had formed opinions of their own. Though he had fought under the people's flag for forty years, he seemed to think that so little had been obtained for this long service and sacrifice of time and means, that he might as well have sat in the hall of his ancestors, or followed the plough with even less ambition than the consular Roman. At the expiration of these forty years, he and his colleagues had gained but a few yards in front of the citadel whose governor claimed to hold possession by divine right, supported by hereditary peers, self-seeking lawyers, Church and other militants. No man had been braver on the bridge, or shown more alacrity in scaling the outer walls, for he was a "tall gentleman, by heavens, and a most gallant leader;" but failing to reach the inner

circle, Curwen got disheartened with his own industrious soldiership. Having shaped his course from the beginning of his public life with *the* minority who had to fight for every inch of ground against the Persian hordes in front, he should have remembered that to gain the repeal of any duty, or the removal of any disability, was high honour to the gainer, and of great benefit to the State. The removal of the salt tax and other imposts, and the division in favour of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill (1825), might have sufficed to show him who had been so mainly instrumental in obtaining these results, that the darker clouds of political thraldom were being scattered by the winds, and that brighter patches of blue were becoming visible on the horizon. Though he might not live to see it, he should have been encouraged in the belief that the younger political aspirants would continue the good fight, and carry it to a successful issue.

His companions in arms, those who had stood shoulder to shoulder with him in phalanxed fight against the inroads of Pitt in 1790, and onwards through many campaigns, had nearly all succumbed to a more inexorable enemy than Tory ranks and Tory denunciation. The great leaders had long been gone, and he (Curwen) had become advanced by seniority, and not less by superiority of claims, to the first rank of captaincy; and now both rank and file have been swept away. He who had stood with the band of the forlorn hope of a previous century was now left the sole representative—the forlorn hope itself. He loved to talk of the honourable toils in which he had been engaged along with

the master-spirits of the age; and on looking back to the days o' lang syne, came glowing reminiscences of the party struggles, mingled with sorrowful regrets that both his friends and his foes of the grand political epoch had passed on to their inevitable fate. For of the men who had fought with Pitt or sided with Fox in those noted conflicts when the spirit of Whiggism struggled so manfully against an arbitrary Ministerial power,—of the Burkes, Grattans, Sheridans, Romillys, and their followers whose vigorous and unfaltering combats, marked by intense action and no less amazing declamation, thrilled the senate-house like a grand passage-at-arms,—how few were left with Curwen survivors of the field, in which only to have fought was honour, but to have conquered —almost immortality. In 1825, Mr. Curwen was spoken of as one of the last of the remaining heroes who had fought at the side of the Achilles and the Hector of these wars,—who had had long experience in Parliament, and participated largely in its discussions, and had been at all times on the most friendly terms with the chiefs of both his colleagues and adversaries.

His own end came at last. He had passed the anniversary of his seventy-second birthday, he had ceased to attend public meetings, and with the autumn of 1828 came less robust health, and the gradually increasing feeling that his work was done. He spoke of Sir James Graham being his successor in the county, but at the same time expressed some doubts as to Sir James's adhesiveness to the Whig party, and the probability of his disappointing the yeomanry of Cumberland—a prophesying train of thought that would

have had no support in 1827-8, but which became too strongly verified in 1837. Without any premonitory symptoms, Mr. Curwen died on the 10th December, 1828. His remains were interred in Workington Church, alongside his wife. In compliance with both their wishes, there is nothing to mark the spot of their interment, and no inscription upon the walls of the Church—no monumental slab, no sepulchral urn—in memory of a man who filled a large chapter in the history of his county, and whose name will remain in the records of the English Parliament, and in the agricultural archives of Great Britain and the United States of America, as a man of true mark and a great benefactor to his species.

Mr. Curwen left four sons and three daughters of the name of Curwen, and one son as Christian, whose family is now worthily represented by the Rev. W. B. Christian, of Milntown, Isle of Man. Mr. Curwen's oldest son, H. C. Curwen, an estimable man, reigned after him, and he has been succeeded by E. S. Curwen, who has numerous issue.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Curwen's steady Policy and Utilitarianism. Masonic Work. Above Party and Pay. "Not a Paper of Pins" for his Wife! Sir James Graham's Estimate. The Lowthers and the Curwens. The modern Spartans. Pitt's Opinion of Curwen. Concluding Remarks.

NFLUENCED by the circumstances surrounding him, Mr. Curwen could be either grandly stern or pleasingly persuasive. The manly attributes and the womanly feeling were blended in his character, as they are in every true man of Nature's make and majesty. Rich in language, ready in utterance, and sympathetic in heart, he seemed to the manner born to occupy the loftier seats of society, to score a good mark on the historical record, and eminently to win fame and distinction. What might have been foretold of Curwen from his bearing, conversation, and practical knowledge of the world, became fulfilled in no stinted degree; for in every walk of life, speaking publicly, he ranked high, and in some was first and foremost. He possessed ardour, courage, and a various energy, dependent or not upon his bodily temperament. His superiority was not of an adventitious sort; there was a quality of mind as well as quantity of possession, and that of the most workable order. There was no trimming of sails to catch the breeze, no pretence of

sentiment, and no make-believes with him, but a stern cleaving to one policy and one creed in political life. Continuously aiming at the direct and the honourable in life, as a public representative he could not fail to win knightly spurs, in Parliament, and popular applause at home.

Mr. Curwen did not confine himself to isolated endeavours or special walks of usefulness in Cumberland. Whilst solicitous in a thousand ways to improve his own locality by reviving the trade of Workington, and making it of commercial and agricultural note, he gave a new phase to Carlisle, for by securing its political independence he promoted its prosperity, saved it from the fate and still tottering fall of Whitehaven, and made the agricultural interests of Cumberland the most promising and noted in England.

He wished much for increased happiness to the labourer by affording him work, education, and better prospects. He went still further, and considered the question of food, and the kinds of food, best suited in nutritive qualities compared with price. Nor did he overlook the sanitary conditions, recreations, and pastimes of the class. He cultivated with earnest feeling the mutual relations of the employer and the employed, and sought to establish amongst his own workpeople sobriety of thought, respect for the laws, and a genuine patriotism.

When Curwen wrote, "The purport and intention of agricultural societies are to correct bad systems, and in the prosecution of this design they are led more particularly to notice what is generally defective than to panegyrize every instance of merit," he not only

laid down a golden rule for the guidance of all such societies, but seems to have anticipated, as he certainly wished to avoid, the idle compliments and irrelevant talk that prevail so generally at the agricultural meetings of Cumberland in these latter days. Were it possible to resuscitate a society at Carlisle like that of the Workington of sixty years ago, with a man of mark and character as President—a Curwen could not be found in any county family, or perhaps anywhere in the kingdom,—what a revival it would be to the agricultural mind, and what a benefit to the farming interests of the country at large!

While Curwen remained high-priest of his own agricultural temple at Workington, worshippers gathered together at his call, or came from afar, to listen to the oracle; but when age and disappointments combined to rob him of his wonted spirit, things became sadly changed. The Curwen mason had many apprentices and journeymen, but none possessed the art, the strength, and commanding stroke of the master; at any rate none attempted to continue the good work; none sought to extend or renovate the Curwen edifice. There have been several imitations of the Workington fabric in various parts of Cumberland, but they are puny, feeble, washed-out designs, compared with the original—the broad, expressive, and adorned architecture of Curwen. Can no one be found to create a better spirit or give a larger impetus to the farming societies of Cumberland, on the basis of the famed Workington one? Inquiry need not be made of those who managed, or rather mismanaged, the Cattle Plague business in 1865-6,—men who, not enjoying the con-

fidence of the farmers were viewed in the light of secondary rinderpests to the county.

The anxiety manifested by monied men of all classes to obtain seats in Parliament, and the costly sacrifices they were prepared to make to secure the position, gave rise to the belief—by no means confined to the vulgar—that the House of Commons, if not paved with gold, like the streets of London in Whittington's imagination, was piled up with good pickings, *ex. gr.*, sinecures, places, pensions, and emoluments. The aristocracy of England had to thank themselves for the growth of this opinion, as when a man of official position and lucrative pay appeared at the hustings and distributed the current coin freely amongst the electors, the public mind became incredulous of either honourable ambition or patriotism as governing the conduct of public men. Mr. Curwen, on his first appearance at Carlisle as a candidate for the suffrages of its citizens, might have been charged with the prevailing sin of looking to Parliament for aims of his own; but after his noble defence of the franchised rights of the freemen, and his continued exertions to maintain these intact, he never incurred the odium that fell upon his Yellow opponents—charged with being in Lowther pay, and stooping to aid the Lowther power. In relation to Cumberland, the Lowthers sought power by the covert insinuation and the wily arts for entrapping the unwary, and no small amount of direct bribery: it was well for Carlisle, and not less well for the county, that Curwen was born to show up the Lowther system, to oppose it; and above all to crush it under his feet. To describe the character of the Lowthers to those

who have come into political knowledge since the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832, would be a critical step, if not dangerous to the truthfulness of the limner; suffice to note here, until a more complete sketch of "the Ninepins" family can be given in black letter, that it was bad—very bad. The yellow flag of the Lowthers was associated with yellow gold that reached the electors' pockets, and bought the electors' votes—with yellow liveries for flunkies and tidewaiters, and that monied class of time-servers who longed for the honours (surely in an Irish sense) of sitting on the bench with the Justice Shallows of the Lowther Coventry. Shakespeare's words should have been inscribed on the Lowther standard when it was first confronted and trampled in the mire by the brave Curwen:—

> This yellow slave
> Will knit and break religions; bless the accursed:
> Make the hoar leprosy adored; place thieves,
> And give them title, knee, and approbation
> With senators on the bench.

If Mr. Curwen had done nothing more than check the political and highly aggressive influence of the Lowthers in Cumberland, his name should be held in high esteem, and his memory ever cherished by all the friends of constitutional government. "The old blue flag" under which Curwen fought at Carlisle from 1786 to 1820 would never have been hoisted in triumph on Crossfell by Cumberland yeomanry in the middle of the 19th century (1852), if the Lowthers had not been checkmated by Curwen at the close of the 18th, and still kept at bay by the Workington squire till the year of his death in 1828.

While so much political feeling stood between Mr. Curwen and the Lowthers—the veriest animosity on the part of the latter—there was a time in the history of their respective houses that showed a better disposition, when one of the Lowthers married the daughter of the "grand knightly" Sir Thomas Curwen. Love bound the families in the 16th century, and it would have been better for both had that love continued to the 19th; then the grasping and would-be-all character of the Westmoreland family might have been modified by the more chivalrous blood of the Curwens. The Lowthers, though yeomen-born, showed a tendency to ape the feudal lords of the past, whilst the Curwens, born in the purple, and able to muster hundreds of feudal retainers, seem to have prided themselves more on gaining the affections of those around them by acts of generosity and kindness, than by intrigue, usurpation, and command.

Among the lofty exceptions—few and far between—of men seeking Parliamentary rank from pure and honourable motives, Mr. Curwen stood pre-eminent, and above all suspicion. He gained nothing by his public services, nor did he seek to benefit his friends and relatives at the expense of the country. His benefactions were great, and no less impartial than unsectarian in their distribution; but these benefactions were made out of his own pocket and at his own risk. The most independent and honest of public men may have had some acknowledgment, however small, made for their patriotic services. Thus, in the seventeenth century, the faithful Andrew Marvel regularly received a cask of ale from his constituents, and relished it too after the dry-as-dust

debates in Parliament; and in the days of Reform, in the nineteenth century, Mr. Hume, better known as "Joe Hume," the economist, was credited with receiving a butt of cider as a small *bonus;* but there is no mention made of Curwen ever getting a drop of liquor or refreshing beverage from Carlisle (where its Corporation had a well-stored cellar of the best vintages—meant, of course, for Tory palates only, and these very rank and very dry) or from the county of Cumberland, every parish of which had benefited by his public exertions or by his private courtesies.

It has occasionally been said of those M.P.'s who claimed honesty of action, that if they got nothing direct or indirect, their wives received *douceurs* for their husbands' votes—little Parliamentary perquisites in the guise of Court balls or Ministerial assemblies of the season. Even here, however, Curwen stands absolved, for on the completion of his thirtieth year of public life, as Mrs. Curwen, writing to her most intimate friend regarding a certain Cumberland family lying in wait for any snug thing that might be had in Parliament, says, "My husband, God bless him! never procures me even a paper of pins by his politics." Not "a paper of pins" for the wife of a man who served his country thirty years! Not "a paper of pins" for the wife of a man who had saved a city (Carlisle) from political thraldom, and had fought thirty campaigns, and lived to fight ten more, and in each of these trying his utmost rightfully to maintain the best interests of the nation!

There were no two opinions as to Curwen's exalted position and invaluable services to his native county; and of those whose views might be quoted of weighty

influence, the Cumberland reader will be best satisfied with the opinion of their greatest statesman, Sir James Graham. During their many years' intercourse, these two men were on the best of terms; Sir James loved Curwen in life, and to the last year of his own life always spoke with reverence of Curwen's memory, both in society and at public meetings in Cumberland. The county found an able successor to Curwen in Sir James Graham, who, in the House of Commons, took up the consideration of many subjects that had engaged his old friend's attention. When the life of Sir James comes to be discussed (as the writer hopes in the second volume of this series), the many points of analogy in the character of these able representatives of the people will be set forth.

At the agricultural dinner held on the 25th April, 1829, at Carlisle, Sir James presided, and said: "The next toast which I mean to propose to you, it would be highly improper in any meeting of the yeomanry and farmers of this county to omit; it would be particularly so on my part, as the public conduct of the gentleman to whose memory I now propose to do honour, holds out so bright an example as to what ought to be my guide. When we consider his spotless integrity during a long and useful life—never having during the thirty-five years that he was honoured with the confidence of the freemen of Carlisle asked a single favour from the Minister of the day for himself or any of his family;—when we remember the aid he afforded to agriculture by the improvements he introduced, and by his constant residence in the county; when we consider the degree of sympathy that existed between him and the

yeomanry of the county, and their attachment to each other;—when I remember all these things, and at the same time call to mind that I am his unworthy successor, I think you will not consider it unbecoming in me, even at a convivial meeting like the present, to propose that we should drink in solemn silence to the memory of your late representative, John Christian Curwen."

In further corroboration, and soon after the statue of Lord Lonsdale had been erected in Carlisle, Sir James met some of his old magisterial friends close to the Court House, and, pointing to the Lonsdale statue, made use of these, or nearly similar words: "Instead of erecting a statue to that man (the emphasis on the word *that* may be imagined by those who knew Sir James's force of expression), who did nothing for your county but try to swamp its political interests, you should have raised a monument to John Christian Curwen, the father of Cumberland agriculture, and one of the greatest men of the times." A most apt comment assuredly, for the best that ever could be said of Lord Lonsdale was said by Sir James, that he went through the world "respectably enough, and that is all."

When parting with his Carlisle friends in 1820, Curwen told them that from the moment he entered the House of Commons he had been convinced of the necessity of Parliamentary Reform, and this opinion continued in full force to his last night on the Whig benches. He voted for the abolition of the slave trade, and every liberal and philanthropic measure. The only vote he ever regretted giving in the Commons, during his forty years' membership, was the one

he offered against Mr. Manners Sutton, when soliciting the Speakership; and this he felt pride in mentioning to his family when taking a retrospect of his long Parliamentary life. It is not for a moment supposed that he regretted his refusal of a peerage from either Mr. Addington or Lord Castlereagh.

The 10th of May, 1825, was a fitting climax to Curwen's Parliamentary experiences, and the more fitting as it was consonant with the general character of the man who, in the third year of that life, won the good opinion of the great yet fastidious Edmund Burke, and soon afterwards came to be classified with the "Old Minority" band—known as the defenders of public liberty—the bold Spartans of the new Thermopylæ. At the dawn of his career, Mr. Curwen laboured hard for the claims and valued rights of an island in the Irish Sea, and obtained the lasting goodwill of its natives, and a silver acknowledgment besides; and at its close, served the greater isle, Ireland, by claiming for the large majority of its inhabitants the privileges enjoyed by a Protestant minority; and by a decision of the House in his favour helped to dethrone that usurpation of power, the influence of which had rankled in the hearts of the Irish Celt, and made British rule appear tyrannical and odious.

The *alpha* and *omega* of Curwen's public life were alike distinguished and serviceable. In trying to remove civil and religious disabilities he was always at his post contending against the strong currents and stronger blasts of a powerful oligarchy. Men in his earlier days (and the feeling is not dead yet) were measured by their subserviency to the ruling power.

They were spoken of as excellent persons if pliant and ready for compromises, but incurred the epithets of Radicals and dangerous if non-pliant or independent. Mr. Curwen cared nothing for the censure of the political autocrats any more than honest men care to-day for the *odium theologicum*, the bitter hate of the would-be elect, or modern Pharisees. Mr. Curwen was too strongly independent, too enlightened in opinion, and, above all, too patriotic, to be linked with the party spirit that savoured more of selfish interest than national honour. To him it was a loftier and nobler distinction to belong to the "Old Minority" than to sit on Ministerial benches—a mere instrument in the hands of power, or a slave to other men's opinions and commands. Like the "Old Guard" in the Napoleonic legions, the "Old Minority" never flinched from soldiers' duty and a true soldier's principle. They were always ready for combat, and neither the animosity of Governments, nor threats of the Tower and Tyburn tree, could check the ardour of that fine body of English statesmen, of whom Curwen was among the chief in action, if not the boldest of all in speech.

Mr. Curwen sought the reduction of taxation, and encouraged the Government of his day to make pacific overtures to all nations; whilst he as earnestly contended for purity of elections and Parliamentary Reform. Upon his banner might have been inscribed what had been his war-cry for forty years in the Commons, those words which the Whigs emblazoned on theirs in 1830, and found so telling in their favour —"Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform."

He shone in practical sagacity, hearty goodwill,

and true manliness of character. Like the Christians, he possessed great firmness of principle, and good judicial sense; like the Curwens, he displayed great patriotism and love of country. Though not undistinguished as a courtier, he may have played a less chivalrous part than some of his ancestors who figured in the mediæval times on the Curwen side; but as a practical statesman anxious for his country's welfare and the support of the landed interest, he was surpassed by none of his kinsmen in the many Parliaments of England to which the Curwens were called. In John Christian Curwen the family reached a lofty eminence, both in agricultural and senatorial honours; and many generations have passed away since Cumberland could boast of a public man so independent and straightforward, so constant in patriotic motive and action; and so largely philanthropic in all his undertakings.

Mr. Curwen had no real political enemies but the Lowthers, who were enraged at his popularity; for though in money and lands he could not for a moment be compared with them, he was immeasurably their superior in everything else. The Lowthers could drag into the field hosts of tenants, fawning parasites, and placemen; but Curwen's camp was filled with volunteers, hearty and enthusiastic civilians, lay and clerical, who sought nothing beyond a shake of his hand and a social recognition. Curwen's following embraced the intellect and heart of the county—men who claimed respect at home as good landlords and neighbours, and whose presence on the hustings carried conviction to the doubtful and less well-informed electors. The backing of Curwen was

not only the backing of the many, but the backing of the best representative men of the county. It showed what political integrity and social character could do, and that neither the Lowther-acreage nor lordly domination could vie with the more genial acts and impressive words of Curwen. To live in the hearts of a people was a proud position for any man to hold, and Curwen assuredly was the man of Cumberland from the dawn of the century to the hour of his death.

When Pitt, in the full enjoyment of power, and ruling the Court, the Cabinet, and aristocracy of England, was told of the increased vigour of the Whig party by a new election, he replied, with some *hauteur*, that the members of the Opposition could be accommodated in a hackney-coach—showing how few men there were in the assembled Parliament whom he regarded in the light of formidable rivals, or whose opinions were worth consideration in debate. In this hackney-coach group—this select few—Pitt placed John Christian Curwen, the highest compliment that could have been paid to his vigorous talents and Parliamentary influence, and far outstripping in force any encomium that he could have received from the Whig press or his own party leaders.

Though occupying a prominent position, less seems to have been said of Mr. Curwen after his death than falls to the share of fifth-rate people. He was missed from the Commons and from the agricultural Societies; but as he could no longer serve either the one or the other, the incensing relics of the man's greatness seemed buried deeper than oblivion after his death. Even those who had lived on the breath

of his kindness hung no *immortelles* upon his tomb. His autograph, with those of C. J. Fox and Edmund Burke (the association had an historical meaning), brought a guinea at a sale by Messrs. Southgate, in London, and those of Pitt and three noble lords brought twelve shillings; but forty-three years of public life, devoted to the best interests of his native county and to the enfranchisement of its chief city (Carlisle), never called forth a word of public praise —never elicited a guinea subscription to a memorial fund by which the name of John Christian Curwen might have been held in perpetuity as a man of the people—around whose history the halo of honesty, independence, and public virtue, might have shone to succeeding generations and for ever. Patriotism may live, and patriotism may employ its best days in endeavouring to promote the public interests, then waste its strength, die, and be forgotten by the men of Cumberland. Where mediocrity grows and is puffed up with its own self-conceit, a true spirit can find no response and no habitation; and true genius is but a cloud that passeth away like an ephemeral existence. Yet of the noble entity John Christian Curwen it might well be said—

> Such a man
> Might be a copy to these younger times;
> Which, follow'd well, would demonstrate them now
> But goers backwards.

APPENDIX.

—o—

MR. CURWEN published his various speeches on the Duke of Atholl's claims, on the securing of the independence and purity of Parliament by preventing bribery, on the Poor Laws, and other subjects to which allusion has been made in the foregoing pages. He also addressed various letters to the newspapers on national affairs. His chief works are—

1. The Reports of the Workington Agricultural Society, 1806—1814.
2. His "Cursory Observations on the Corn Laws." A pamphlet.
3. "Hints on Agricultural Subjects, and on the Means of Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes." 8vo., 1808. 2nd edition, 1809.
4. "Observations on the State of Ireland, principally directed to its Agriculture and its Rural Population; in a Series of Letters written on a Tour through that Country." 2 vols., 8vo.
5. His Contributions to the Board of Agriculture, for which he received gold medals.
6. His Address to the Labouring Classes on the good effects of Friendly Societies.

WILLIAM BLAMIRE,

OF

THE OAKS AND THACKWOOD NOOK,

M.P. FOR CUMBERLAND,

CHIEF TITHE COMMISSIONER,

ALSO

COPYHOLD AND INCLOSURE COMMISSIONER

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THIS SECOND EDITION OF A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF

WILLIAM BLAMIRE,

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY THEIR

OBLIGED FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

CHAPTER I.

The Blamires, or De Blamyrs, of Hawksdale. William Blamire—his childhood associations with Dr. Paley at The Oaks. Education. Thackwood Nook. Farming Pursuits. Equestrian Powers.

THE Blamires of Cumberland were men of substance when the Parliaments of England met at "The Rose" in the reign of the Plantagenets. In the same township (Hawksdale), and not a mile distant from "The Rose"—known to-day as "Rose Castle," the episcopal palace for the diocese of Carlisle—the Blamires found a habitation, and founded a family name. Hawksdale stands in the picturesque vale of Cauda, in the midst of fine meadow land, near to the village of Dalston, to which parish it belongs, and about six miles south-west of Carlisle. The Blamires, or as they originally bore the name of *De Blamyr*, were known in Hawksdale before the formation of the Carlisle bishopric. When the *De Blamyrs* parted with the prefix *De* is not known; but, like the Curwens, they appear to have cast aside in the fifteenth century that which many of the nineteenth-century folk, looking patrician-wards, would gladly take up, and reverence as a mark of Norman distinction pertaining to high ancestral claims.

It is on record in the Wardrobe accounts of King

Edward the First for the year 1299, that the King, coming north to the Scottish wars, stopped at Rose Castle on his way, and that his wardrobe was put up at the houses of *Henry Warde* and *Robert de Blamyr*, at "The Rose," and a payment was made them by the King in recompense for the damage they sustained "in their hedges, in litter, and in firewood," and other matters. The family tradition is that the first "De Blamyr" (known for his aptitude in frustrating ecclesiastical tyranny) was brought to this part of the country at an early period of the Norman rule, for the purpose of checking the overbearing spirit of some churlish priests; and verily a man of note if he succeeded in his task! It is of some interest (ethnologically) to connect the *tradition* with the last historical *fact* of the family, and to mark the blood affinity or mental endowments of the *first* of the race cropping out again after six or seven hundred years of genealogical continuity in the *last* male heir of "The Oaks" branch of the family—William, the subject of this biography. And not the less interesting that this able representative, William Blamire—called to office and high responsibility by the Government of William the Fourth—should by his Tithe Commutation Act have done more than any man in England to settle the grievances and heartburnings between the Church and laity that existed in almost every parish, and so materially to lessen the animosity of two antagonistic parties in the State.

The family of Blamire, in whom these pages are interested, resided at "The Hollins," afterwards named "The Oaks," and belonged to the landed gentry or higher yeomanry class; well to do, and sincerely re-

spected. No class in England had greater enjoyments and fewer cares than these old country families—living from generation to generation on the rents or produce of their ancestral acres. Perhaps the Blamires were more of the gentry class than land-tillers; at any rate, there seems to have been an air of graciousness in the family, whether proceeding from Norman blood or a good English grafting, that ennobled their position, and obtained for them friendships among the highest circles, both in their own and other counties.

William Blamire was born at "the Oaks," near Dalston, in Cumberland, on the 13th April, 1790. His father, whose name he bore, was a naval surgeon of distinction, noted for his great skill and urbane disposition, and held in high estimation by his brother-officers at sea; and still more prized by his neighbours at home for his medical services and many acts of charity. His mother was Miss Jane Christian, of Ewanrigg Hall, Cumberland, whose good sense and amiability are still remembered in the district: she was the pattern of an English gentlewoman in every relation of life. This happily united couple, whose daily walks exhibited an untold benevolence, had four children, three daughters and a son, the latter the subject of this memoir. The gratuitous services of Dr. Blamire, his large hospitality, and the truly loveable character of his wife made "the Oaks" well known and favourably regarded by a large circle of friends. Amongst others attracted to its genial hearth was a man of great celebrity, and now of historical repute—Dr. William Paley, archdeacon and chancellor of the diocese of Carlisle. At this period of his history, Dr. Paley was vicar of Dalston, and a frequent

guest at "the Oaks." In his angling excursions up the higher reaches of the Cauda or Caldew, he had a pleasant smile for the family of the Blamires as he passed their door; he also occasionally dropped in for a rasher of bacon at the hospitable hearth of the Twentymans, of Hawksdale.

Paley christened young Blamire, but forgot to record the baptism at Dalston Church. Did this omission arise from a mind too much engaged in abstruse theology—he was then engaged with his *Horæ Paulinæ*—or from a presentiment that the child christened was to have a history too great for parish registers? However it may have been, it is no less extraordinary as a fact than remarkable as a coincidence, that the political views which occupied Paley's mind most deeply in reference to the Church were allowed to slumber for nearly half a century, and might have slumbered on had the child William Blamire not been born. Further inquiry tends to show that Blamire was christened at "the Oaks," and on the same day that "the Oaks," or house itself,* received its name; that both the boy and the building were christened by the same person, and that person Paley. In the case of the boy, water was the typical element; in the house business it was a bottle of brandy. It must have been a red-letter day in the Blamire calendar—a son and heir baptized, a house and home warmed, and a guest in the author of the "Moral and Political Philosophy" to act as master of

* The house was formerly known as the Hollins, or Hollinbush, but a new wing, and other additions, and its contiguity to the finest oak in the district, induced the Blamires to change the name to "The Oaks."

the ceremonies! Perhaps no such day of christening could be cited in the whole of Paley's baptismal experiences, and none more likely to be historically lasting. "The Oaks," or the trunk of its famous tree, may hold its own for centuries to come; and the name of the boy William Blamire will be linked with Paley's as long as Dalston remembers its *genii loci;* nor can it ever be erased from the national archives of England as long as England has a State Church, and that Church a tithe sustenance.

Could Paley, in his romps with the young Blamires, have foretold that the toy-courser of the Oaks nursery in the last decade of the eighteenth century was to rise in his manhood to Parliamentary honours and a comprehensive knowledge of the secular tenures of the Church, he might, and no doubt would, have left the embryo-commissioner a legacy of instruction for his guidance in framing the great measures pertaining to the commutation of tithes and the enfranchisement of the copyholds of England. It cannot but be viewed as curious that whilst the philosophic views of Paley on Church polity were developed in the vicarage of Dalston, the school of Dalston gave the first rudiments of learning to a boy who was to live to carry out those views to a successful issue.

In 1799 Blamire became a pupil of the Rev. John Fawcett's, at Carlisle, and received many an uncalled-for thrashing in a room now occupied by the Dean and Chapter's office, above the Abbey Gates. In 1805 he was sent to Westminster School, and early in 1806 reached the sixth form. On the 22nd January of that year he took the place of one of the King's scholars, and formed part of the funeral *cortége* of the

great Pitt. The most powerful minister England had ever known could hardly be followed to the grave by a lad of good scholarship and ingenuous mind without exciting thoughts of a political tendency. Whilst at Westminster he was asked by Mr. Sanderson,* a wealthy landowner, of Plumpton, in Cumberland, to visit him. Blamire said he would be happy to do so at the approaching holidays, but ere these arrived Mr. Sanderson died, leaving the whole of his estates to him—the heir of the Oaks. As Blamire had only been seen once by Mr. Sanderson, his smiling face must have made a most favourable impression on his more aged acquaintance, or Sanderson's happy remembrance of Blamire's very charming aunt Sarah (who married Colonel Graeme, of the 42nd Highlanders), and the love he bore her in his earlier days, had absorbed all other thoughts in settling his affairs. After obtaining the seventh form young Blamire left Westminster, in 1808; and in October of the same year entered Christ's Church, Oxford. In the autumn of 1811 he completed his college education.

Blamire, to the disappointment of his father, could not be induced to adopt any of the learned professions. As in medicine the practice of Dr. Sangrado was still much in vogue, and his father's door was daily assailed by patients requiring surgical treatment, he was led, and wisely for himself, to eschew physic. In after-life he was prone to form opinions, and tolerably cor-

* Mr. Sanderson seems to have been the last of his family, and his attachment to a Cumberland beauty, Sarah Blamire of Thackwood, causes him to figure here as much in the light of the Hamlet of a love story as the bounteous benefactor of young Blamire. His will was a true testament of his deep-rooted affection for one of the prettiest women ever seen in Cumberland.

rect ones, on the diseases of both men and cattle. Lawyers had no better character at the beginning of the century than now, and as he saw them rather in the light of disputants than peace-makers, he declined the law and its rich perquisites. His disposition and general character pointed more to the Church, which unquestionably he would have adorned by his amiability, scholarship, and good manners; but he had a great and instinctive aversion to the Church, and this distaste increased by age and was not lessened by his tithe commutation experiences. As he would not join any of the professions, his father seemed to have little or no choice but to place him and his much-loved sister, Jane Christian, upon one of his farms three miles distant from the Oaks—an ancestral property called Thackwood Nook. This took place in 1813. Here Blamire lived happily, and cultivated his ancestral acres, till he entered public life. Thackwood witnessed the growth of his marvellous popularity, and the happy meetings of his friends and the chiefs of his political circle, and the many hundreds of representatives of the agricultural interest. Thackwood was his home—a home endeared to him by the devoted affection of a sister, as it was also the scene of his last hours.

Thackwood is about nine miles S.S.W. of Carlisle, and situated in a retired locality. In going from the village of Stockdalewath, or by the road across Broadfield towards the higher districts of Castlesowerby, the river Roe (Raw or Raugh) is crossed at Highbridge, and about half a mile from its western bank and on rising ground may be observed some irregular farm buildings constituting the homestead of Thack-

wood Nook. The house itself, nearly two hundred yards from the road, and much hidden by outbuildings on the eastern side and a plantation of forest trees on the south, is of an old-fashioned seventeenth century character, and consists of two stories, by no means elevated, with mullioned windows, and rough-cast whitewashed front. Leading to the main entrance is a carriage drive and lawn, a flagged walk along the front of the building, with tufts of musk gracing its borders, some fine old yews and thorns, and overtopping these, and shading the house itself, a few splendid oaks bordering the entrance gate. Looking from the front door under the crooked arms of these aged oaks towards the west is a charming bit of Cumberland landscape. To view this mountain scene of Caldbeck and Carrock Fells whilst seated in his arm chair out of doors was the daily delight, and one of the greatest of home pleasures, of Mr. Blamire in his latter days. The walk from Thackwood to Raughton Head—the most accessible one to pedestrians—is little more than a mile through the fields —a walk rich in picturesque scenery of hill and dale, and of the vales of the Caldew and Raugh.

Thackwood was one of the Red Spear Houses of the Honor of Penrith, of which Castlesowerby is a member. The holders of these Houses were, no doubt, originally the *Redmans* or *Radmans* of whom mention is made in *Domesday* or the *Red Knights.* They held by the service of riding with the Lord of the Honor when he went forth. They made their appearance at the Forest Courts "under the Thorn," in Hesket, annually on St. Barnabas Day, and they headed the procession which yearly on Whitsun-

Tuesday opened the fair, brandishing their spears to defy and deter marauders. They were, in fact, conservators of the peace as well as military tenants, and were charged with the maintenance of good order in their districts. Over the front entrance of Thackwood, and standing out from the roof, is a small figure of a man holding a spear, and tradition yet repeats the old cry,

Ride on ! Ride on ! and turn Dob's Hole,*

which we may fancy to have risen in days of yore, whilst the Red Spears with their followers started from Thackwood to scour their country of invaders, or to muster the population to the peaceful gatherings of court or market. At a later period—the days of border warfare—these Red Spear houses may have been of use to the Castlesowerby farmers in sheltering their cattle from ruthless mosstroopers.

It would be a pleasant theme to re-people Thackwood with its nobleminded and sympathising hearts of the past and present century, and especially to narrate the doings of that fine character and personification of goodness, known as "Aunt Simpson," who furnished her parlour table with three basins, one containing gold, another silver, and a third copper, provided with which she could at all times meet the wants of the poor and the distressed, or render a helping hand to the unfortunate in adversity; then her favourite nieces,—Susanna the sprightly poetess,

* In a former edition of this biography it was hinted that "Dob's Hill" should stand for "Dob's Hole." The writer now learns that Dob's Hole is assigned to a part of the river Raugh near Thrangholme, near to "the Benedict Walk"—named from the circumstance of the Benedictine Monks passing that way to the west of the county from "the Nunnery" near Kirkoswald.

so prone to mirth and gaiety of soul, and her sister Sarah, so prone to attract by her personal charms; and, passing down the stream of time to the present century, the two Jane Christians, mother and daughter, each of whom possessed

> A form as gentle as if sweetness strove
> To see how far she could succeed with love.

Here it may be well to notice that the excellent Dr. Blamire, the father of William, died at the Oaks on the 29th January, 1814, as much regretted as any human being could be, and was followed to his last resting-place by five hundred true mourners. Mrs. Blamire survived her husband twenty-three years, dying on the 15th March, 1837, at the great age of eighty-seven. Both were interred at Raughton Head. Allusion has already been made to the sweet amiabilities of this lady, and it is evident that she would exercise a happy influence in moulding her son's character. She lived to see him rise from the position of farmer and yeoman to become member of Parliament for his native county, and Chief Tithe Commissioner for England and Wales, and the most popular man of his day. Her recollections of the past as well as the present century, and the pictures she drew of the people and their customs in both high and peasant life, would have formed a valuable chapter in the history of Cumberland. Bishop Law, Paley's great friend, wrote his dying thoughts to her. Mrs. Brougham, the mother of Lord Brougham, loved her as a sister. She saw three generations of people, and what a narrative of changes she could recount from the days of the "pack-horse" journeying fifteen miles *a day* to the development of the railway system and

its locomotive travelling more than thirty miles *an hour!*

As Mr. Blamire was the nephew of John Christian Curwen, of Workington Hall—the acknowledged father of Cumberland farming, and frequently stayed under his uncle's roof, he had abundant opportunities of acquiring a knowledge of practical agriculture. He was an apt scholar, and his education, love of rural life, and zeal in everything he undertook helped to make him so. He may be said to have come in with the progressive period that marked the farming of the second decade of this century, and it is well understood in the east of Cumberland that he helped in part to extend the labours and useful example set by his uncle in the west of the county. Though his estates were comparatively small he had the heart to spend and to spend freely; and like all experimental farmers, he gained his experience at a large cost. He inherited a great deal of Curwen's character—in agriculture, in politics, in social life, and well-earned popularity. He also had his hobbies in farming and rode them quite as hard. He was fond of testing prevailing opinions as well as trying to establish fresh principles. He naturally earned the name of "new-fangled" or theorist, even by those who ought to have known that all good practice has been preceded by or originated from theory. For a time he was enthusiastic in West Highlanders, then Shorthorns, then in horses and pigs, &c.; in short, his experiments were most varied and comprehensive and naturally cost him dear. His memory was so good he would not be at the trouble of recording his observations. This was the more to be regretted, as periodicals at that

time were not of the multiplied character they are to-day, and agriculture had no special organ for its promulgation of new truths, or the rightly understanding of the old data. The newspapers contained a notice of passing events, fragmentary, ill-arranged, and of little practical bearing upon the true history and art of farming. The breeds of stock were, and still are, the great facts of our agricultural meetings, and every praise is due to those who, like Blamire and his followers, make our annual exhibitions of such import. But, with every desire to render thanks where thanks are due, the fact still remains patent to all thinking minds that these agricultural meetings would *tell* more, and be made to contribute more largely to the improvement of our national resources, by a careful analysis of the facts collated, forming a statistical summary comprehensible to the humblest farmer.

Blamire was the life and soul of the Cumberland agricultural dinners, and an announcement that he was to take the chair was sure to obtain a good muster of farmers. In office or out of office at these societies, he always had something to say, and always said that something well. He dealt in facts and well-grounded observations, and detailed them out in plain and intelligible language. Nor was he without jest and humour, with which he could enliven the driest details, and give a raciness to his talk and dinner speeches. A farmer's club was established at Raughton Head in 1839, of which he was honorary president. He had only one opportunity of taking the chair, and he was welcomed with rapturous joy by his neighbours and the farmers of the district. To the members of

this, probably the first monthly club of the kind established in Cumberland, he shewed his wonted generosity in presents of seeds, fruit, cheese, bacon, and other farming products from the South of England, and newspapers, pamphlets, and other publications pertaining to the subject of agriculture.*

Blamire's love of stock led him to all the fairs and markets in Scotland and the northern counties of England. It was in the pursuit of this hobby that he showed his strong constitution and bodily powers. He used to ride from Glasgow or Edinburgh to Thackwood Nook, a distance of 105 miles, in one day, and upon one horse! To ride from Kendal after tea, or from Lancaster home (sixty-five miles) in time to entertain an early dinner party, gave him no trouble. His horse was a Waterloo veteran and knew its rider well. Blamire rode the same pace and sat the same seat for hours together, and he who could keep alongside of him was reckoned a good equestrian. He rode like the cavalry soldier, and occasionally slept on "Cappy," his favourite nag, when riding homeward. On the day following any of these long journeys Blamire was as fresh as the morn, or his own smiling face.

* This club, called "The Inglewood," did good service in its time, and was instrumental in introducing the subsoil plough to the district; it also offered a prize for the best ploughing by the ordinary plough, and so revived the old-custom of ploughing-matches,—now become so attractive in East Cumberland and so valuable in creating a market for the best-designed agricultural implement.

CHAPTER II.

Portraiture of Blamire, his Social Relations—the Bishop and Curate; his Political Relations. His Shrievalty. Presides at the Dalston Blue Dinner, becomes the most popular man of his Class, and is selected for the Representation of Cumberland.

MR. BLAMIRE was of tall stature and broad-built frame. His head, though well developed in size and symmetry, was neither so high nor so expansive as is sometimes met with. That his brain was well organized is evidenced by his life and his labours. His eye was bright and persuasive, and one that beamed with kindness. His head of hair was black and thickly set, and a waving curl graced his forehead in early life; but the fine dark colour became silvered with age. The nose comported with the rest of his face, and the lips and chin were expressive of his suavity of temper and affability. His complexion wore a healthy tone, and his cheeks carried a high degree of colour and freshness, showing the bloom of youth long past his meridian. His temperament was a mixture of the nervous, sanguine, and bilious—forming a constitution well adapted for sustaining vigorous activity of mind and body. His large chest and framework would have carried him far beyond the "threescore and ten" had his nervous system not

suffered from excessive and unremitting labour. His limbs were strong and muscular; his slightly turned out toes were the only drawback to an almost faultless exterior.

On approaching Blamire out of doors you felt nearing the presence of a thoroughly gracious and pleasing man. His face was hearty and happy in expression. His voice was pleasant to listen to and seemed tuned to his natural courtesy, and that courtesy greatly developed by his intercourse with the Whigs—the most noted of courtiers—served him greatly in his official life and carried him through many a difficulty. His face and voice won the good opinions of men, and were no less attractive to women. It was often and truly said that Mr. Blamire never forgot his character as a gentleman. His politeness was of the highest order. He seemed specially favoured by nature in that way—a gentleman to the manner born. He relished a good joke, and the fire of his eye, when laughing, lighted up with the joyousness of youth. His own story-telling was amply illustrative of the men and manners of Cumberland, and many a lively anecdote was heard at Thackwood of farmers, their wives, and sweethearts—of electioneering times and social gatherings in the rural districts. His dress in the country was farmer-like, without, however, the hodden gray of the rustic; and this country style of outside pocket and broad lapped coats he retained when moving in the best society in town. His fare was of the simplest and plainest kind, and spare in quantity. At Thackwood he rose and breakfasted early, dined at noon on farmer's fare (he was specially fond of potato-pot or

a slice of boiled bacon), had his favourite "dish of tea" * at five, no supper, and early to bed. His usual stimulant was a glass of gin largely diluted with hot water.

Nothing could exceed Blamire's readiness to oblige every one—friend, neighbour, or acquaintance. The total abnegation of self was the most marked trait in his character. Whatever sacrifice of personal interest had to be made to enable him to confer favours upon others was made willingly and heartily. It was his nature to serve others and to forget himself. When engaged in kind offices he was happy beyond measure. He was the great arbitrator of his neighbour's disputes, and helped to soften many a quarrel and to heal many a breach in the social continuity of Dalston and Castlesowerby. Even bishops sought his aid at critical times, and when the "Church was in danger" from its own imprudences.

One Saturday evening, Mr. Blamire was summoned to Rose Castle by Bishop Goodenough,† who told

* Speaking of a "dish of tea"—Blamire's own words—the writer is reminded of an anecdote told him of Lord Brougham, when Lord High Chancellor. His lordship was spending a day at Thackwood with Blamire and his sister Jane Christian. The tea was set in the drawing-room. The Chancellor cast his eyes on the tea-table and its three cups, and without a word of comment rushed to the end of the room and pulled the bell-rope violently! On the servant answering this hasty summons, Brougham said, in a sharp tone, "Why don't you bring your master his own cup; this [holding up one of the three] is not his—let him have the blue basin." It was this basin that led Blamire to speak of a dish rather than a cup of tea. It says something for the memory of the man who could be Lord Chancellor of England, and do the intellectual work of a dozen men, and yet, after years of absence from Thackwood, recollect his friend Blamire's blue basin!

† Bishop Goodenough owed his appointment to his love of botany and the curiosity of a Duchess! A Bishop hatched by a Duchess would

him that he had been much distressed by a complaint made by the landlord of the public-house at Raughton Head (not a mile distant from Rose Castle) against Curate Dunglinson, of Castlesowerby, and that he (the Bishop) wished Blamire's counsel on the subject. The publican had told the Bishop, and told him truly, that the said curate had come to his hostelry—

Half-fou, half-fed, half-sarkit,

and that being very boisterous with his tongue, and equally apt with his fists, had driven all the customers out of the inn; that on the landlady refusing to draw more liquor for the priest, already—

Far too glorious,

he had climbed up a pole out of doors, upon which the sign of the "Duke of York" was hanging, and broken the royal portrait to pieces, and done other mischief, for which compensation or damages were sought. No wonder the Bishop felt grieved, and threatened to suspend the curate from his "cure of souls." Blamire, listening to the Bishop's recital of a public-house brawl, had some difficulty in maintaining his decorum; he, however, advised his lordship to wait another week, and at the same time offered to go to Castlesowerby Church on the following day and judge of the curate by his pulpit performances. Mr.

have been a fine subject for Horace Walpole's gossiping pen. The writer must be content with saying that the Duchess of Portland engaged Goodenough as a tutor to her family for many years, and had not money to pay him, but she had court influence to make him a bishop. Government patronage was something in those days, when by its application of lawn sleeves to the creditor's person it could wipe out the private debts of patrician ladies!

Blamire went and heard him preach from the text, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." The sermon was clever, and Blamire reported it in the most favourable terms to the Bishop, who kindly pardoned the curate, on condition that he gave up his *penchant* for "strong liquors." Mr. Blamire kindly withheld from the Bishop that the clergyman had preached in country clogs and without stockings, nor did he hint his opinion that the surplice was the curate's principal robing. A man without stockings might well be without shirt, and possibly *sans culottes.* It is written and published that the salary of a clergyman in Cumberland, not so many years ago, was "a harden sark, a guse grassing, and a whittle gait;" in other words, a shirt of coarse linen, the right of commoning geese, and the more valuable privilege of using a knife and fork at the table of his parishioners. Nothing is said of broadcloth and hosiery, and with Curate Dunglinson these were of less import, as his fancies led in another direction,—

> A full flowing bowl
> Was the joy of his soul,
> And *Port* was celestial glory."

Mr. Blamire was a practical farmer, and he learnt to follow the plough, to sow, and to reap. It was well he took so kindly to manual labour, for a man of his temperament could not be idle, and mental occupation and horse exercise did not always fill up the day's engagements. The rearing of stock and the introduction of new breeds of animals were his greatest inclinations. He did not calculate well on the paying part of the business—in fact, he aimed at

success, and thought of nothing else. His mind was too sanguine for the times in which he followed husbandry, but, like a true Englishman, he never allowed failures to deter him from his highly laudable pursuits. He was partial to horses, and not only showed large knowledge of cattle—their breeds, varieties, and natural history,—but knew much of their diseases; and in the midst of harassing work in after years, in the Tithe Office, his old feelings were occasionally revived by accounts he received of his Thackwood stock, when special ailments * prevailed. He used to send brood mares into Yorkshire, to buy "great lots" of ewes from the southern counties, pigs from Sussex, and kyloes from the Western Isles of North Britain: —hence his acquaintance with so many cattle-dealers and sheep-breeders. He knew everything pertaining to the breed of sheep, from the Southdowns on Romney Marsh to the "native black face" of the Highlands. He also became interested in introducing a good breed of sheep-dogs into Cumberland, and was in the habit of relating an instance of marvellous sagacity in connection with one of these animals. The dog instanced belonged to a farmer in the west of Cumberland, and had been with its master to Liverpool on more than one occasion with sheep.

* The writer of these pages had exhibited a peculiar exostosis to the Glasgow meeting of the British Association in 1840, and Blamire, seeing a notice of it in the public prints, wrote, "I have seen many curious instances of exostosis in horses, and in one case where a piece of bone was found in the thin flank I fancied this bone was produced from inflammation of the vessels adjacent to it, and could not be the growth of other bone, as it was situated at too great a distance from it." Mr. Blamire's account is abbreviated; his pathological inferences were quite correct.

The master had great confidence in his dog, and made a foolish bet that the dog would drive a flock of sheep from his home to Liverpool (a distance of upwards of one hundred miles) without help or supervision, provided the toll-gates were left open *en route.* Considering the tortuous road, the great distance, the groups of animals and conveyances to be met and passed on the journey, the dog's chances seemed almost hopeless. In a few days, however, the dog with all his responsibilities reached Liverpool! The sheep were all right, and the owner won the heavy stakes; but the dog, after days of fasting and high nervous excitement on the journey, fell down dead in the streets of Liverpool, a victim to the horrid system of money-betting and his master's vile inhumanity.

Nearly forty years ago, when newspapers were scarce, roads bad, and railways unknown, farmers in the outlying districts, owing to their distance from market and the uncertainty of the demand as well as that of the supply, were much puzzled how to dispose of their fat cattle. The shrewd cattle-dealers and butchers took advantage of the farmers' ignorance as to the state of the market, and bought the "fat" (a term applied to fat cattle ready for the knife) at their own prices. Blamire saw how the farmers were duped by the cattle buyers and was determined to put a stop to it. He sent one of his own men about the country at stated periods to purchase at an honest price, and by so doing the farmer in these isolated places got thirty or forty per cent. more for his "fat" than he had hitherto done. Blamire not only conferred a large benefit upon his own class (and in the Fell side

localities he is still spoken of as the farmers' true friend for this great boon), but by exporting the cattle by a new line of steamboats (1827) plying between the shores of the Solway and Liverpool helped to improve the finances of the Carlisle and Liverpool Steam Navigation Company.

Blamire seemed to know everybody in the county, and this large individuality was the best passport to the confidence and esteem of the Cumberland yeomanry. Men were touched by his easy address, and the familiarity with which he spoke to them on their own subjects. He had a pleasant smile of recognition for the humblest as well as the highest. Being at all times accessible, his house was more like a hostelry than a private residence, as people came to consult him on all kinds of subjects and to beg his help in numerous difficulties. From the lowest artisan to the country squire no one hesitated to ask favours of him, and his good nature, aided by a sanguine temperament, led him too frequently to make promises that were far beyond his powers of achievement. This imprudence was in part atoned for by his accomplishing more than any other man in promoting the well-doing of hundreds of his county folk both in London and elsewhere.

How many land bailiffs throughout England, how many clerks in public offices, in the Excise and Customs, and in governmental situations at home and in the Colonies—how many others placed in profitable business, or on good farms, could speak of the guidance and sole helping hand of William Blamire! Men made their way to London without a sixpence in their pocket in the belief that Blamire could find

places for them. One who had not fingers to stitch a coat for a rustic expected work in the most fashionable shops in Regent Street! Some were fostered by him who were not worthy of his patronage, and did no credit to his recommendation; but in extenuation of this it ought to be said that he was called upon to do impossibilities, or he would never have transformed ploughboys into parsons, cowherds into cattle salesmen, and horse-jobbers into "my lady's" coachmen.

At a dinner party at Holland House, consisting, as usual, of parliamentary and other notabilities, the conversation fell upon the rise of men from the lower ranks of life to the higher stations in society. Blamire, who was present as member for Cumberland, offered to give his experiences, derived from two ploughmen at that time on his home farm. The *first* instance, he thought, would illustrate what industry could do when well directed and tutored; the *second* would show what real talent could do for itself and in the most adverse circumstances. Of the man of industry he related that his sister, Jane Christian, being pleased with the disposition of one of the farm servants, and finding him utterly ignorant of his letters, had set earnestly to work and taught him reading, writing, and arithmetic, and at the same time given him the run of the Thackwood library. During this period Blamire said he had occasion to get a feed of oats for a friend's horse, and whilst doing so found a copy of Livy in the corn-bin of the stable. His curiosity to know the owner of this volume led to the discovery of its being the property of another of his ploughmen, whose classical powers were also equal to

Herodotus. The surprise was not lessened by the knowledge that this man had received no Latin schooling, and had no time for study beyond a short period after supper in a farmhouse. The first-named, just emerging from ignorance of the alphabet into good English scholarship, made friends with his fellow-servant, who taught him a little Latin. This, Blamire acknowledged, induced him to send the man to St. Bees. Blamire had more difficulty in saying what should be done with the man of genius. Lady Holland heard the happily told narrative with great interest, and offered to promote the education of these men. The Rev. Sydney Smith, being present, suggested to her ladyship to make them *pastors*, as by nature they were *pastoral!* The man of industry completed his St. Bees' curriculum of study, and was ordained to an incumbency near Ulverston. The man of intellect, a self-made scholar, obtained honours at his University, and through Lady Holland's help went out to India, but died too soon to attain the higher *status* in life for which his great learning qualified him.

Blamire's position in the county and amongst his neighbours will be best understood by the circumstances attendant upon his Shrievalty in 1828. Though not a magistrate (a questionable honour then as now), he was held in far higher esteem than the magistrate-maker of the county, and was nominated to the office of Sheriff, and discharged its duties admirably.* On the morning that Mr. Blamire, as

* As illustrative of the mode in which the Lowthers have shown their spite, it is enough to say that neither the amiable Lord Morpeth of 1820 nor Mr. Blamire were on the Commission of the Peace till they

High Sheriff, had to meet the Judges of Assize in Carlisle, the yeomanry for miles round, clergymen, magistrates, and others—men of every political shade, and of every religious creed—assembled on horseback at "The Oaks," to do honour to him, and to show their high regard for him as a "good son, a good neighbour, and a good member of society." The Oak tree, with its five-centuried history, never looked upon such a gathering of men, nor could its widely-extended branches, or still more widely extended shadows, embrace more than a portion of that group of Cumbrians. Mr. Edward Bond, of Gaitsgill, a noted member of his class, was deputed by his fellow-yeomen to congratulate Mr. Blamire on his appointment as High Sheriff, and to offer their services as a body-guard to accompany him to Carlisle. Blamire, standing upon the wall in front of the house, spoke to his friends, and attempted to express his gratitude for this extraordinary mark of public approbation, but soon found it impossible to give utterance to his agitated feelings. He wished to attribute their meeting as complimentary to the memory of his late lamented father, and this allusion to the man who was "every man's friend and without an enemy" brought tears to many a manly cheek. Such intensity of feeling amongst full-grown men in the rougher walk of life stamped their love for Blamire, and their attachment to the honest-hearted principles of which he was so noble an exemplar.

had filled the higher office; and only a few years ago the present worthy and intellectual Mr. Ainsworth of the Flosh occupied the Shrievalty without magisterial position, whilst the Bench at Whitehaven was crowded with the toadies of the Castle!

He was escorted to the city by his friends, riding three deep, and his entry created a great sensation amongst the citizens and the county families and others who had come to Carlisle on Assize business. The unlooked for assemblage of hundreds of well-dressed men, mounted on good steeds, and arranged in a semi-military fashion, in the market-place of Carlisle, brought every citizen to the door and every woman and child to the street. Conjecture was rife as to this gathering of horsemen till the handsome equipage and four "dashing bays," the green and gold liveries, the trumpeters and official servants, revealed the peaceful nature of the proceedings. This demonstration, as spontaneous in growth as it was great in significance, in favour of Sheriff Blamire, was without precedent in Cumberland. Many estimable sheriffs have acted since Blamire's time, but not one of them could boast of such a cavalcade, or even a dozen followers. This highly flattering and unexampled tribute of respect was happily alluded to at the Sheriff's dinner by Sir James Graham, who spoke of the escorting party to Blamire as a body of men who could not be matched in any other part of the kingdom, and as a sight which they who saw could never forget. He said the yeomanry of Cumberland were the finest and purest specimens of a set of men who in all periods of its history had been the strength and pride of their country.

The yeomanry of the present day in Cumberland are not the yeomen of forty years ago, when Blamire was at their head. They are neither so numerous nor so influential. The causes of this decline are varied and cannot be discussed here. It is sufficient

to note that great changes have taken place and within a comparatively short period. Small possessions are rapidly being absorbed into the larger holdings of rich "lairds." Farmers now-a-days constitute the majority, and yeomen but the minority of the tillers of the soil. The pride of homestead and acres has in part given way to the pride of living and the pride of appearances. "The ancestral rooftree" that used to be hallowed by each succeeding generation, and upheld at all cost for its sheltering home influences, has, unfortunately, become little more than a figure of speech or an after-dinner sentiment. Whilst families were small and industry predominated the patrimonial estates sufficed for the rude independence and rough hospitality characteristic of the period, and men were said to be "cannily brought up at their own place;" but as families increased in numbers industry often decreased in vigour; and the estates being more frequently subject to the rule of division than the valuable one of addition, became more and more encumbered, and after a lapse of years (during which pride was struggling with poverty), fell into the hands of the mortgagee. The sons of yeomanry so circumstanced sought the towns, or emigrated to the colonies, and in time drew after them both their kith and kin. Then the formation of railways and the establishment of free trade principles, by creating larger competition and more active business habits, no less than the advancing spirit of the age, have done much to upset the old "statesmen"* and the old-fashioned ways in Cumberland.

* "Statesman" is another word for yeoman in Cumberland. The Burgh-side yeomen or "lairds" are still in great force, happy

To describe in detail Blamire's political career would be to write the history of Cumberland politics during the most exciting political period of this century. Whilst a mere child he was taken to Carlisle to see his uncle Curwen chaired in 1796, and from early youth upwards he was taught to imbibe the healthful, consistent, and ever patriotic sentiments of that well-known benefactor and politician, John Christian Curwen. He was conspicuous at all the Carlisle elections, and took a most active part in 1816 as already described in page 149. In 1820 he had so risen in public estimation that he had charge of 600 votes for the county election in March of that year, and ranked next to his uncle in earnestness and success as a canvasser. From 1813 he had been a prominent member of the Blue party, each year adding to his fame and popularity till he rivalled the highest in the county as a man and a politician, and at length became the very idol of the yeomanry, and his name a household word in every hamlet, nook, and dale of Cumberland. He was mainly instrumental in getting up the county demonstration in favour of Sir James Graham, by heading the list of requisitionists inviting the Netherby baronet to a public dinner, in the summer of 1830, and everywhere trying to enlist the attendance of the yeomanry. His presidency at the noted "Blue dinner" at Dalston was the second great fact of the dinner itself, and his speech helped to establish that unanimity of feeling

and hospitable in their clanship, and it is possible that other parts of the county might furnish a few exceptions to the general opinion expressed above.

so much needed amongst the party, and which led to such crowning success in the following year.

It has been said that he played a part, and often a conspicuous one, in all the political movements of the county after 1813, but he had a still greater part to perform, one which his own modest nature never dreamt of, whatever his friends might have anticipated —a part so striking and eventful as never to be forgotten in Cumberland, and that part was a political triumph achieved against fearful odds—a triumph which resounded throughout England as the crowning victory of public opinion during the momentous struggle for Parliamentary Reform. When the Whigs appealed to the country early in 1831 for support to their Reform Bill, the Blues in Cumberland—full of the enthusiasm prevailing everywhere in the United Kingdom—were of opinion that they could drive the Lowthers, then so dominant, out of the field if they had a really good man to head the fight. It appeared a bold stroke of policy to attempt to cope with so formidable an opposition as that of the Lowthers; but, with a firmly-united party and so glorious a champion as Blamire, whose name would be more than half the battle, the principal supporters of the Blue cause felt sure of their strength and sanguine as to their success. The yeomanry of Cumberland were determined upon carrying Blamire, and the best and most popular men on the Whig side addressed a circular to the electors—containing *inter alia* the following:—"We beg leave to recommend to our brother freeholders William Blamire, of Thackwood Nook, as being eminently qualified. . . . And we hereby declare our determination of putting him in

nomination on the day of election without further communicating to him our intentions of doing so, as we know him well enough to be assured that he will continue to assert, as he has already done, his unfitness to be our representative, on the ground that the independence of our county cannot be secured by a man of moderate fortune. At the same time, we cannot but remember that Mr. Blamire is the nephew of a man who spent upwards of £100,000 in support of the cause of independence; and the great nephew of Harry Curwen, who so nobly stood forward as our champion in 1768."

When Sir James Graham, of Netherby (who, with Sir John Lowther (Tory), had represented the county since Mr. Curwen's death) came to Carlisle, he not only expressed his disapproval of the views entertained by his party, but scouted the very idea of another Liberal being brought forward to oppose the Lowthers. Finding that his arguments were of no avail, he then asked what great landowner was there in the county capable of standing such a contest, and on being told that Mr. Blamire had been fixed upon, said, in a sneering tone, "What! am I to carry Blamire on my back?" This attempt to lessen Blamire in the eyes of his own party was too much to be borne even by men who had long listened to Sir James as an oracle, and who had been little more than his political servitors. They rebelled, and, in the midst of significant looks and some approaches to explanation, a voice* came to the rescue as well as to the point at issue—a voice, as loud as it was honest,

* The speaker was the late Mr. John Graham, of Carlisle—a true Blue and strong partisan.

cried out, "Take care, Sir James, that Blamire hasn't to carry thee on his back." This was followed by applause from every part of the committee room. Sir James, thus bearded, however he might chafe inwardly, had to adapt himself to the new circumstances of a party colleague and a county contest. The imprudent remark of which he had been guilty was never forgotten, and many of the supporters of the Whig cause ever afterwards looked upon the Netherby baronet with suspicion—a suspicion that strengthened each year till 1837, when Sir James experienced a most bitter humiliation and defeat at the hands of the Cumberland yeomanry.

CHAPTER III.

THE CUMBERLAND ELECTION OF 1831.

THREE candidates offered themselves to the electors of Cumberland in 1831. Lord Lowther, now the Earl of Lonsdale, as the Tory or Yellow; and Sir James Graham, Bart., of Netherby, and Mr. Blamire, of Thackwood Nook, as Whigs or Blues. The two latter were the people's choice. They had been solicited to come forward on the people's interests by a numerously signed requisition, and they proved themselves worthy of the call. Since the "great election of 1768" there had been no such excitement in the county as this fight for Reform in the year 1831. In those days the polling was confined to Cockermouth. This absurd custom was enough to call for radical reform, for Cockermouth being situated far from the centre of the county involved so serious an expense as to preclude all but the richest from becoming candidates. The Lowthers knew this, and believed in the potency of their gold to scare away all opposition. It would require many pages to give Blamire's part in the history of this great contest. It could not be for a moment disguised that he was the popular candidate, and that time, money, and personal interest were sacrificed to an incredible extent by the yeomanry to

carry him whom they considered to be the representative of their own class, and the exponent of their own wishes.

The election was in a remarkable degree demonstrative of the spirit and feelings of the people. Political enthusiasm knew no bounds, but like the heather on fire, it burned and blazed, and blazed and burned again. The blood of the yeomen, not easily moved, rose to the fever standard. Such was the enthusiasm that the fate of the Reform Bill seemed to hang upon the votes of Cumberland electors, and the fate of the Cumberland election on each individual voter. Nor were the women less alert in support of the cause, and in admiration of the man who like themselves tilled the land and proved its honesty. Those who perchance had seen Blamire at their "ingle nooks" on wooden "settle" partaking of their homely fare of milk and barley bannock used to say he was "a born farmer, aye, and every inch a gentleman." No truer or more apt definition of the man could well be given.

> The feint o' pride, nae pride had he,
> * * *
> Mair than an honest ploughman.

The great cry of "Blamire and Reform" was heard everywhere in the county. It resounded from Christenbury Crags and towering Crossfell to the wild banks of Southern Esk and the sylvan slopes of Eamont. It came from the mining burrows of Alston and Caldbeck, from Gowbarrow Park and Weddom Flow. It swept over the moory uplands of Gilsland's broad barony, over fertile vales and bleak pastures. It was heard in sheltered nooks on the mountain

sides and by the sunny environs of the lakes. It resounded along each running brook and beck and burn, and all the tributaries of fresh supply to the Solway Frith, and along its tidal shores from Burgh Marsh to Duddon Sands. To this cry the electors responded wherever a housing could be found or a man with a vote. From the towns, villages, and hamlets, freeholders issued in groups, all bent on one road, and that road leading to one spot—that spot the battlefield where the independence of the county was to be lost or won.

It is difficult in these peaceful political times to form an estimate of the feeling which then reigned in the county—it was wild and noisy, and possibly extravagant, as popular feeling is apt to be. During the spring-time of 1831 it was noted that, at markets and fairs, at the village "smiddy" and roadside "public," at the doors of churches or in the kirk garth on Sundays, men got together and talked and argued of the coming struggle and its contingencies. In the more remote districts the country tailor and saddler—often itinerant in the spring season—received unusual welcome, as much for the news they brought of the election in prospect as the services they rendered in patch and stitch. The vendor of ballads and small basket-wares reaped a rich harvest in his rounds on the credulity of the country wife, whose purse became more patent as her ears were regaled with the news most suited to her wishes.* And this excitement was

* In those days it ought to be remembered that postal communication was quite unknown in the rural districts; letters were left at the market town and "the quarters" of the parties to whom they were addressed. Newspapers were scanty, railways did not exist, and common roads showed less of Macadam than of ruts.

infectious: it extended to the young, even to "the whining schoolboy;" it revived also the youthful thoughts of the "lean and slipper'd pantaloon" of age. Lads at school in their early teens forgot Latin and algebra in listening to the warm discussions of their seniors, and for the first time in life became cognizant of a world of politics, with its attendant passions, prejudices, and patriotism.

Common language and common idioms were soon exhausted as the medium of conveying ideas, and men found better vent for their feelings in the phraseology of the race-course and the slang of the cockpit. It was "Blamire's maiden plate, and he was safe to win the stakes"—"he had metal as well as speed, and nowther dyke nor brae could keep him from the brush." "As for cocks, where was there a breed like that of Dalston; and was Blamire not a 'Dalston black red' by birth, and of real game, and sure to beat the yellow-plumed capon"?

To get so numerous a body of men to the great rendezvous in the West required the use of every available animal of the *genus* horse and its hybrids—the blood nag, the old roadster, the hardy pony, the wiry mule, and ever-plodding ass. Vehicles of all sorts and sizes were brought into use: the new and newly got up, the old, the mouldy grey, and grotesquely fashioned; some shining with varnish, others creaking with rust; the stage-coach and rumble, the post-chaise and drosky, the gig single, the gig double, and the gig *vis-à-vis*, or well-known "*tub*," the jaunting-car and common cart; with their brushed, black, and burnished-up harness to match. Pedestrians were not a few. Some walked from Nenthead and the ex-

treme eastern boundary of the county, some from the debateable land on the Scottish borders and other outlying districts, forty and even fifty miles distant, paying their own costs to and from Cockermouth, and rejoicing on their way in being able to do a good turn for "Willy Blamire." Patriotism of this stamp is exceedingly rare, and to record its most manly display is to record one of the most gratifying facts in the history of Cumberland.

To group these hearty political volunteers in their proper order would involve large consideration and space. The manufacturer and tradesman, and other well-to-do denizens of our towns—the county magistrate and consequential squire—the "statesmen," or yeomen in general—the "Dandie Dinmont" class—the

> Border laird of good degree,
> A many-acred, clever, jolly squire—

and the primitive freeholder of the bield and garth, are but types of a larger classification. And if this gathering of electors was most varied in the scale of wealth and position, the tailoring or habiliments of the parties showed divers makes and colours. There

> Many a muffy, many a kindly squire,
> In showy garb, worth many a silver pound,

representing broadcloth and high gentility; there the aspiring youth (young Cumberland of that day) with blue surtout and gilt buttons; there the grey coats and stout corduroys, rivalling in tone, if not in durability, the limestone grit on Warnel; there the low-crowned and broad-brimmed hat, the gaudy necktie and gaudier vest, and coat of skirt immense and

pockets unfathomable, the knee-breeches and "brown tops," and spurs and ponderous whip, constituting the external adornments of a portly frame, that presented a ruddy face expanding into double chin, and a "fair round belly, with good capon lined," and lusty limbs and vigour to match: all these types of men, young and old, rode together or fraternized at the well-known hostelries on the road—and there formed pictures worthy the pencil of Hogarth and the pen of Defoe.

The colours of the party were, of course, visible, from the faintest declaration of a blue token at the button-hole, to the flowing ribbons, the broad sash, and the gay rosette, adorning man and horse and vehicle. Flags of the same rich colour, with suitable mottoes, the work of finely-tempered fingers, graced the village Maypole or highest mural elevation, and heralded each group and detachment of voters. Then the thrilling notes of female voices, the hearty cheers of the villagers, and, as the schools entered into the spirit of the times, the cheers were "thrice and thrice again," hardly ceasing till the people of the neighbouring hamlet had taken them up and re-echoed far and wide "Bonnie Blue and Blamire for ever!"

Dan O'Connell used to preface his speeches at the great monster meetings by saying, "This is a great day for Ireland." The same might have been said of Cockermouth on the day of nomination for the Cumberland election in May, 1831. It was truly a great day when Sir James Graham and Blamire stood on the same hustings as advocates of the same cause, in defence of popular rights, and in opposition to the most powerful Tory house in the kingdom. It was a

great day for a town of three or four thousand inhabitants to have its population increased fivefold, and its main street densely thronged with an excited crowd; for in addition to the vast number of freeholders already mentioned, who came from all parts of the county,

> That day the doors of parish school were shut,
> And every scholar got his leave to play.
> Down rush they, light of heart and light of foot,
> Big ploughmen, in their coats of hodden grey,
> Weavers, despising now both web and treadle,
> Collier and collier's wife, and minister and beadle.

The colliers were there in great numbers, and for a particular purpose: they had been brought by Lord Lowther from Whitehaven and other places to hiss and to hoot the Blue candidates, and (when opportunity offered) to fight and to bruise the Blue voters. They showed themselves worthy of their pay and their beer, and left nothing undone that would serve to maintain their ancient character for ruffianism.

The Reform question was, no doubt, "a great fact," and the impelling force of the current feeling; but to a large majority of the freeholders the success of Blamire was of greater importance. As Sir James Graham's seat was looked upon as secure, Mr. Blamire's return was the consideration of the hour. With a knowledge of these circumstances, it need not excite surprise that the house of Lowther, with all its territorial possessions, could not stem the tide of public opinion and the mastering influences of so popular a candidate as Blamire. From the first opening of the polling-booths the Whigs kept ahead, and each day distanced the Tories more and more. On the evening

of the third day (Saturday) the voters who had polled for Lord Lowther did not number *one-half* those polled for the Reform candidates. The numbers were, Graham 942, Blamire 917, Lowther 453—a sufficient indication to most men that the Tory cause was greatly on the wane. But Lord Lowther would not retire that night. It was said that he expected a great influx of voters on the following day; and he calculated rightly enough as to the fact, but wrongly as to the direction the voters would take. The voters came, but they were not of the house of Lowther—they came, and in so conspicuous and affirmative a manner, that a distant view of them decided the contest before the gallant leader of the band had reached the outskirts of Cockermouth.

A few words will suffice to explain this interesting episode. Dr. Fletcher Wells, of Skelton, a genial friend and neighbour of Blamire's, roused the voters of his district at an early hour on Sunday morning by the sound of church bells and the loudest of ringings. These voters repaired to the doctor's house, and breakfasted in a manner worthy of the kind welcome and large hospitality of Mrs. Wells. They then started for the scene of action, gathering volunteers at every road end, and at each well-known inn on the way. By the time the cavalcade reached Uldale Moor it presented a formidable "array of men and horse." It was on this high ground that the blue colours first became visible to one of Lord Lowther's reconnoitring parties; and those parties lost no time in riding towards the leader to ascertain the number under his charge. The doctor seeing his game, said that his detachment of voters were Blamire's special

friends, and from the Thackwood district; that they covered miles of road (and the long, straggling line of horsemen supported the idea), and would hardly reach Cockermouth that night. He added further that his friends were prepared to encamp for the night and to remain at Cockermouth till the contest was over and Blamire chaired!

The Tory scouts rode back in great haste to Cockermouth, and reported that hundreds of Blamire's friends were on the road thither, and in so demonstrative a fashion that they had tents and provisions with them. This news created great alarm in the Tory camp; the hopeful few became crestfallen, whilst those already downcast hung their heads in despair. It was evident that the crisis had come, and that it would be madness to continue the contest any longer. On this decision being made known, the indignation of the party knew no bounds. "To think that the house of Lowther should be beaten by *two* to *one* on the third day of the poll by a mere farmer—a candidate who had proclaimed in his address to the electors that he was not possessed of more than a legal qualification"

Mr. Stanley, of Ponsonby, and the well-known "Billy Holmes," rode to Brayton Hall that Sunday afternoon, to announce to Sir James Graham that Lord Lowther had withdrawn from the contest. So the fight was over, and the Blues had won! Reform was in the ascendant, and old Toryism had gone to the tomb of all the Capulets. Even Nurse "Holmes" could not re-animate the down-stricken Tybalt.

The news spread like wildfire, and became known over the county the same evening or early next morning. Blamire was amongst the last to hear of

the great victory. He had gone beyond Whitehaven, and was difficult to find amongst "the Lowther preserves." Though the poll was closed on Saturday evening,* some of Dr. Wells's party insisted on recording their votes on Monday, on the ground that Lord Lowther had not made his resignation public. But the fact was, these men were determined to have their names registered for Blamire, and it was difficult to restrain such ardent soldiers of the fight—the men who had made the last charge and dealt the decisive blow to the Tories.

Fifteen thousand persons were present at the hustings to hear the speeches and to witness "*the chairing*" of the candidates. In returning thanks, Blamire alluded to the sacrifices made by working men on his behalf, and defied any county to produce a parallel to their patriotism. He mentioned the honest but poor clergymen who voted for him, and added, "You will find no pluralist, no man who holds two livings, in the list of Blue voters." He hoped to see the day when the clergy of the Church of England

* Immediately after the nomination on Thursday, the 5th May, the polling-booths were opened. The following shows each day's poll :—

	First day.	Second day.	Third day.	Gross state of the poll on Saturday evening.
Graham	218	324	400	942
Blamire	215	317	385	917
Lowther	71	165	217	453

On Monday the polling-booths were opened for a time to the Blues, and one vote was formally taken for Lord Lowther. The numbers polled on that day were—

Graham	254
Blamire	253
Lowther	1

would be held in the same esteem as those of the Church of Scotland, and he attributed the difference to the one being paid by tithes and the other not. He also said, "I am a poor man, a mere farmer, like many of yourselves. . . . I hope a reform in Parliament is the prelude to a reform in the Church. . . . I believe tithes to be the most improper, the most iniquitous mode of payment ever devised by the ingenuity of man." (Immense cheering.)

Sixty-three years had elapsed since the county had returned two Whig members.

The chairing of the successful candidates, now gone out of fashion, was a great event on the day of victory, and many a child had its first dawn of memory awakened by the grand sight and the immense concourse of people. The ladies of Wigton had the honour of presenting the Blue chair for this occasion. Blamire used to boast in his jocular way that in one particular he could beat Sir James out and out, and that was in the chairing. He could stand with more ease, and bow more frequently, because he had been in the habit of standing in the middle of a cart whilst driving as a farmer to and from the harvest field. Sir James had had no such experience, and found the chairing irksome.

Two clergymen—the Rev. J. Benson and the Rev. E. Stanley—deserve special mention for the aid rendered Blamire at the election. Thirteen hundred persons dined on Monday in tents, and, of course, there was more speechifying and more rejoicing.

This Cumberland election had attracted a great deal of attention in London and elsewhere, and the victory obtained by the Reformers was looked upon

as one of the most decisive in Great Britain. For a farmer to beat a lord, and that lord in his own stronghold, was a marvellous success. It was an unheard-of instance of an honest commonalty triumphing over an aristocratic exclusiveness—a triumph for which Cumberland had great reason to be proud.

It has been stated that Blamire was by far the most popular candidate, yet the number of his votes was not more, but a fraction less, than his colleague's. This fact recalls the only blot, as viewed by the yeomanry, on Blamire's escutcheon during the election. A few words will suffice to explain the grounds of this opinion. Sir James's pride had been hurt all along from the night that he expressed his objection to a contest, as well as throughout the canvass, where he met with so many rebuffs; and this pride was not softened, but increased, by Lady Graham, whose manner to Blamire was significantly haughty. To quiet her ladyship's feelings, Blamire said to her that she need give herself no thought about the success of Sir James, as his return was certain, for should any difficulty arise—should the ship appear unable to weather the storm—he (Blamire) would become the "Jonah" of the enterprise. Knowing how keenly Sir James would feel to be ranked second on the poll, Blamire asked his more intimate friends to withhold their votes till the end of each day, and then, if Graham's numbers were not above his (Blamire's), that they should plump for the baronet. This was a favour to ask! Men who had come great distances and right heartily to vote for Blamire, and him alone, thought it hard to divide their votes between him and Graham; therefore, to be asked and almost forced to

plump for Graham, for whom they had no liking, was applying the most severe test to their friendship that could be devised. It was only after a long and persuasive talk that Blamire got his followers to act in accordance with his wishes, and each day's poll shows Graham slightly in advance of Blamire. A well-known yeoman used to say that Blamire was the most perfect of men, but that he had as a public man committed two political mistakes. Both of these referred to his electioneering tactics in Cumberland, and one of them was forcing his friends to vote for Graham. The same opinion was shared in by many others. Every one who took part in, or has listened to the recital by competent witnesses of the events of that election, is aware how very different the state of the poll would have been had Blamire not exercised his persuasive power. Blamire told his friends of his anxiety for a peaceful attitude with Sir James in the county as well as a hearty co-operation with him in Parliament, and that to promote this it was essential to place Sir James at the head of the poll. The gracious feeling of such a procedure was highly characteristic of Blamire, and though it was viewed by the yeomanry as an error, there is no fact in Blamire's life—marked throughout by kindness—that redounds so greatly to his credit, and so abundantly displays the nobler sentiments of his nature.

Amongst many curious episodes in the canvass and election, the writer may select two or three of the more striking. On the Saturday evening the Rev. Mr. Stanley, speaking at the polling booths on the result of the day's proceedings, alluded to the influence of the women in the contest. An old woman

said there was John Wilkinson, who had been "Yellow," but, continued she,—

> "John Wilkinson I will make vote 'Blue,'
> Or else John Wilkinson I will make rue."

John wisely avoided the *rueing* by adopting the blue badge at the polling booths. The following is a stronger fact in the same direction. In his canvass Blamire called at the house of a well-to-do yeoman, and whilst talking in the farmyard, a blithe, buxom girl (the yeoman's daughter and her father's pride) beckoned Blamire to come into the house. He, of course, complied, and followed her into the best parlour. The girl told Blamire that she was in love and engaged to marry, but unluckily her lover was a Yellow, so that her love ran counter to her politics—another verification of the old quotation, "True love never did run smooth." The blue-eyed maid was also in love with Blamire's character, and insisted on her bridegroom-elect voting for the popular candidate. The object she had in confessing this to Blamire was to ask him to watch her lover's vote. If her lover voted Blue, she would wed him; if Yellow, she would discard him. Blamire was greatly touched by this little incident, and spoke of it as the highest compliment ever paid him. And well he might, as who ever heard of "the ruling passion" in woman, and that woman only "sweet nineteen," being overruled by fickle politics? It is told, but with what truth this deponent knoweth not, that the young squire (the bridegroom-elect) went to the polling booth humming over—

> "Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,"

and that, after recording his vote against his principles, he completed the couplet thus,—

"And women make men fools, by Jove!"

Amongst many examples of Blamire's unparalleled influence at this election, the following is deserving of citation. A "small statesman," residing about Mosedale, on the east side of Skiddaw, who often availed himself of Blamire's good offices, forgot his benefactor when the election took place. Some of the Mosedale voters on returning home from polling saw their selfish neighbour in the fields, and in his shirt-sleeves. One of the party, knowing his shabbiness of character, waggishly said, "Willy Blamire axed what had becom' o' thee—thou could fin' thy way to Thackwood Nuik, but thou didn't ken't road to Cockermouth." "Nay! did he say sae?" "Aye, to be sur he did." The heart of the man was touched by what appeared Blamire's message, and he at once replied, "Varra weel then, I's off at yence—just caw at our duir and tell't mistress (his wife he meant) I's gan to t' poll, and I'll nit be back till to-morn's neet!" "What! thou'll nit gan in thy sark sleeves surely?" "Oh! I care nowt for my cwoat if Blamire wants me," and off he went to discharge his duty as a Cumberland elector.

The election wave had reached the inmost nooks and corners of the county. Whilst Blamire was standing in the main street of Cockermouth speaking to one of his old friends from Broadfield, in East Cumberland, he saw an old man from Ulpha—near the extreme western point of the county. He introduced the two old-fashioned men to each other, and

thanked them for their kindness in coming so far on his behalf. The old man from the small hamlet of Ulpha Kirk—one of those primitive places which in its best days could only boast of a pack-saddle communication with the rest of the world—said, "Nay, nay, Mr. Blamire, nae thanks. What! I'se cum twice as far to see these queer trundling kists* on 't roads." The old yeoman meant the post-chaises and carriages on the streets, with which he was quite delighted, as new modes of folk-conveyance.

* The reader will recall Dandie Dinmont's hasty flight in a post-chaise from Portanferry with Bertram. "Have a care o' me," said Dinmont, "but this is the queerest thing yet!—odd, I trust they'll no coup us—and then what's to come o' Dumple?—I would rather be on his back than in the Deuke's coach, God bless him! . . . Odd, if we were ance out o' this *trindling kist* o' a thing," &c.

CHAPTER IV.

Parliamentary Experiences. Marriage. The Tithe Question—Illustrations of its Workings. Blamire's Speech on the Tithe Bill—his Counsel sought by the Government. Chief of the Tithe Commission.

MR. BLAMIRE took his seat in Parliament on the 20th June, 1831. He voted with the Reform party, advocated a popular government and a great reduction in the expenditure. He was opposed to all monopolies, to the unequal taxation of the people, and to the ballot. He was in favour of a small fixed duty on corn, and his great knowledge of the whole bearings of the food question gave weight and import to his views. In the first struggle for free trade, when none of the leading parties in the State could reconcile themselves to a change so great and apparently so revolutionary as "total repeal," Lord John Russell proposed certain fixed duties in lieu of the sliding scale; and whether it was a coincidence or not the writer is not prepared to state, but these fixed duties of Lord John's were almost the same as those suggested by Blamire.

He made numbers of friends on both sides of the House, and his character ranked high among the estimable men of his party. The attention which he had bestowed upon tithes in Cumberland enabled him to discuss this intricate matter with the best-informed

representatives from other parts of England; and though he did not obtain much light, he felt more and more satisfied that no Ministry could hold out that did not recognise the necessity of settling the Tithe question. On the 22nd of October, 1831, on presenting a petition from Cockermouth, he spoke against the Registration Bill, and showed his familiarity with the different tenures of land, and the whole question involved in the Bill then before the House. Attorney-General Campbell (afterwards Lord Campbell) was impressed by the speech, and thanked Blamire for the hints he had furnished the promoters of the Bill. When "the Dower Bill" came to be discussed (June, 1832), the House was taken by surprise on hearing Blamire speak so ably on legal matters, and in so pertinent a way as to call up O'Connell, Crampton, Sir James Scarlett, and all the leading lawyers in his favour. The Attorney-General had charge of the Bill, but was not disposed to accede to Blamire's suggestions, though these suggestions had been approved of by the highest legal authorities. Blamire rose a second time to urge the rights of the women as parties interested in the Dower Bill, and threatened to divide the House on his proposition. Campbell, seeing this, gave way, so that Blamire's views were carried into effect.

Some of Blamire's old friends in Cumberland joked him on his capital speech on the Dower Bill, and his defence of the ladies, and hinted that he was meditating marriage. They were correct in their surmise, as he was then preparing the way for this important step. On the 3rd April, 1834, he married his cousin, Dorothy Taubman,

youngest daughter of John Taubman, Esq., of the Nunnery, Isle of Man, and relict of Colonel Mark Wilks, Governor of St. Helena. He then took up his residence in Upper Harley Street, London.

As soon as the Reform Act came into operation, Cumberland was divided into an Eastern and Western division. In December, 1832, he was returned for East Cumberland, along with Sir James, and again in January, 1835. Little need be said of Blamire's parliamentary career from 1831 till 1835. He served frequently on committees, and was regularly at his post in the House of Commons; but beyond making serviceable friendships and collecting valuable agricultural data from the members, and proving to others his great knowledge of rural affairs, he held no leading parliamentary position. His fame came after the *Ides* of March, 1836—it rested on one speech, and that speech embraced only one subject, but that subject was the TITHES of England and Wales!

The tithe question was of national importance, and deeply affected the interests of the English Church —a Church which claimed a State policy and a State stipend for its support. The tithes had an early origin, and formed part of the Papal system that had to be interwoven with our Protestant, or so-called Protestant, institutions. There seemed less difficulty in the adaptation of the golden stock (tithes) to the new grafting (Episcopacy)—the money of the Papacy to the development of that hybrid yclept Henry the Eighth's Church—than in the determination of articles of faith or the formation of religious doctrines. Christian teachers of the sixteenth century not claiming apostolic origin, and not guided in their faith by

human dogmas and human creeds—fancying the time had come

> Of States with laws from Gothic bondage burst,
> And creeds by charter'd priesthoods unaccurst—

looked upon the Government of that period as having no warranty and no scriptural grounds for continuing the tithes as a maintenance to the priesthood. The same Christian men also maintained that the clergy who had displaced the monks and usurped the tithes could only rest their claim to those tithes on the dictum of a salacious monarch, and the boldness of a sacerdotal supremacy looking to its own profit.* This sentiment was revived during the rigid puritanism of the Commonwealth, but with the return of the Stuarts prelacy prevailed, and the tithe payments to priests prevailed also. Whether tithes be viewed from a Papal, Prelatical, or Presbyterian point of view, the fact remains indisputable that they are property, and must have proprietors; and it is equally evident that the duty of the State is to fix the proprietorship.

During the great European struggle men had other matters to engage their minds than domestic or home grievances, but after the downfall of Napoleon, and peace became established *without*, the tithe-owner and tithe-payer made war *within* the realm. When it is borne in mind that one-half of the revenues of the

* Old Fuller looked upon the profitable piracy of Drake and Hawkins (in the days of Queen Elizabeth) in the Spanish Main as a clear case "in sea divinity," where "few are such infidels as not to believe doctrines which make for their own profit." This axiom in "sea divinity" may have derived its sanction as well as precedent from the "land divinity" that guided the priests of a previous reign (Henry VIII.).

Church of England—and that Church the richest and most aristocratic in the world—rested on tithes, it is not surprising that the prelacy fought hard, and were well backed by the patrician families. The whole question had from time to time been discussed by our statesmen and divines, but owing to grasping as well as vested interests, the varied interpretation of the law, the straining at the gnat and swallowing the camel by both the interested parties—nothing was done in the way of a general arbitrament. The war of animosity (always the more rancorous where religion enters into the discussion) ripened more and more, till the proprieties of the Church, no less than its supposed historical claims from the Mount of Olives, became lost in the attitude of a church mammon and a church militant. It was in vain that nonconformity cried out for a wider and juster application of "the tenths"—it was in vain that nonconformity referred to free education, to Christian missions, and to the larger necessities of the aged, the widows, and the fatherless, and charitable purposes in general. It was equally vain to argue, and quite as futile to prove that the Church of England was not the Church of Christ when the aristocratic alliances of the priesthood could command the aid of the civil powers; for of what avail was a Church of peace and Christian love with only a written book in its support against the Church of England with its "spiritual lords" in the Upper, and heavy battalions at the command of the Lower House?

To describe the state of things arising out of tithes which prevailed in this country forty years ago, or discuss its varied bearings, would require a long

chapter and a more experienced pen than the writer's. Had old Fuller, or Daniel Defoe, been brought in contact with tithe feuds such as prevailed forty years ago, what a narrative of amusing stories, what pictures of human weakness, would have been woven into the literary and historical tapestry gracing the walls of nineteenth-century social England! To the able painter of men and manners, whose pencil possessed the art of delineating man's manifestations and passions, tithe England presented a wide field for psychological study—a large display of "the curiosities" and "the phenomenons" of human nature for word painting, satirical or otherwise. Tithes and tithe exactions, being, ostensible and tangible grievances, were the great theme of conversation with country folk, who denounced the tithe-owner in no measured terms at all their social meetings. The man who had seen his best wheat stook carried off the land was not in a humour to hearken to counsel, much less to be toned down by his counsellor's interpretation of the law. "A fig for the law and the prophets" was his notion, and too often it was indicated that the law was felt less obnoxious than the presence of the prophet, or rather the English vicar —a much more comfortable personage than the old Jewish soothsayer. At weddings or funerals, where the clergyman came visibly before his flock, his acts of omission no less than those of commission, were unsparingly canvassed. In many parishes the great bulk of the people withdrew altogether from Church observances (Sabbath and sacramental ordinances), and would not enter into the presence of the priest till the last rites of humanity forced them to the

burial-ground of the Church. If the priest was exacting, the people were no less complaining; if the priest was exorbitant in his demands, the parishioners were no less evasive in their payments of his dues—indeed they rejoiced and boasted when their homely arts enabled them to triumph over his educated vision. The talking politician of the parish found tithes a capital peg upon which to hang his complaints and long tirades against Church and State. When he touched upon the apostolic era and an unpaid ministry, and instituted comparisons between the past and present form of unfolding Christianity to the people, his facts were difficult to gainsay; but he had a still greater hold upon his hearers when he showed how tithes stood in the way of "good management" and agricultural improvements.

Mr. Blamire in his youthful days listened to the stories and anecdotes pertaining to tithes, as they were often recited on wintry nights to family groups sitting around the bright log of the old-fashioned fireplaces, the wide chimneys of which constituted the bacon and ham larders of almost every farmhouse. No stories were more spicy, and no anecdotes more impressive, than those connected with the parson and the tithe-pig. Even the songs and ballads, generally supposed to be fair mirrors of the times, and to reflect the feelings and wishes of the people, took cognizance of tithes. One of the best songs ever written in the Cumberland dialect, entitled "Wey, Ned, man!" and composed by Blamire's Aunt Susanna—a song often sung and often quoted—shows both sides of the tithe dispute, with a certain leaning (natural to woman's politics) to the Church and Conservative view of the

question. "Ned" is almost in a state of melancholy with England's wrongs; "Joe" is hopeful and national. One stanza may suffice here, but the song itself should be read in all its entirety. Ned speaks—

"True liberty never can flourish
Till man in his *rents* is a king,
Till we tak a tithe pig frae the bishop,
As he's duin frae us, is the thing;"

to which Joe replies—

"What, Ned! and is this aw that ails thee!
Mess, lad! thou deserves maist to hang!
What! tak a bit lan frae its owner!—
Is this, then, thy fine '*Rents o' Man*'?"

What homely, selfish pictures of human life and human action might be drawn from the parson and his man in their tithe rounds of the parish. The writer finds a difficulty in selecting from a large store of illustrations. Two apposite examples of tithe-collecting will enable the reader to judge for himself of how that system worked as part of the great Christian scheme for regenerating England. In the early part of this century clergymen were not above their work, and acted wisely in looking after their own tithings, selecting the best of whatever tenths belonged to them. It is true that their keenness for "the flesh-pots" was occasionally matched by others than Egyptian women, and not so guileless as the "true Israelite." A clergyman called at a farmhouse for his tithe goose, and it became necessary to drive the flock into a pigstye to enable him to make his selection. There was a step into the stye, and one of the geese, by no means a thriver, and lame withal (to use the words of the owner, "a kind of wreckling, and a

lameter into the bargain "), could not mount the step with the alacrity of its web-footed brethren, and consequently fell into the rear. The priest, being of a humane turn, made an effort with both hands to assist the hobbling goose, which the country wife observing, quickly cried out, "Touch and tak, Mr. Parson; aye, Mr. Parson, touch and tak." As it was the law to take the one laid hold of, if choice was made, the poor parson had to put up with his bad luck, and to bear with Christian temper, or at any rate with assumed placidity, the smirking looks and triumphant nod of his shrewd and sharp antagonist. How that farmer's wife did chuckle aud make the female gossips of her neighbourhood hold their sides when she told "how t' leame parson" (rather silly is meant by the phrase) went out of the fold with the lame goose under his arm, leaving her own good nine as loud in their cackling as she was in her chuckling!

Robert Wilson, of Dob Cross, had gone to Dalston vicarage and paid all his tithes, and been bowed to the door with the bland "good evening" of the Chancellor (Fletcher). The latch of the garden wicket gate had just been fastened by the farmer, when the door of the vicarage is opened, and "Oh, Mr. Wilson, you have forgotten the sheep!" is heard from the vicar. This question being settled at the wicket, there was another "good evening," and the farmer took his course along the road by the churchyard wall, but had not proceeded far when the Chancellor's voice, with a hem in his throat, was heard close behind the farmer: "Mr. Wilson, we forgot the calves in our settlement." Another explanation—also satisfactory, and another "good evening"—also

bland. In less than five minutes the farmer had reached the house of a friend in the village, and was about to take a seat, when a gentle tap at the door was heard, and the door being half-opened by the intruder, disclosed the venerable head and white locks of the Chancellor, in an attitude resembling that of solicitation. The farmer was beckoned to the doorway, when the Chancellor said, "Oh, Mr. Wilson, we have quite overlooked the bees!" Now, Robert had no bees, and said so in a decided tone, with this additional remark, "I'se quite sur ye hae gitten aw yer reets this time, Mr. Fletcher." They parted with the fourth "good evening"—the farmer rather tired of the repeated attacks on his pocket, but the Chancellor apparently as bland as if he had been on a Christian mission. When Robert returned into the house, he said to his Dalston friend, "The bees, the bees! Dar, lad, I think there's nae bees half sae industrious as thur priests in luiking after their own rich hives." Of the vicar it might be said—

To tithe pig when roasted
He still has a keen eye,
And oft has he boasted
In tempore veni.

The small tithes seemed the most obnoxious of all. Not only did old tenements pay tithes, but after they had fallen into a state of dilapidation, and become unfit for the shelter of either man or beast, or levelled with the ground and their foundations gone (the place where they stood known only by a more luxuriant crop of weeds and nettles), the tithes were exacted for them as if they were still human habitations and dwellings. When a Dalstonian argued

that the tenement was gone, and the tithes were for the tenement and not the weeds in occupation, he was reminded that though the clay "beild" was gone to ruins, and hardly visible as a ruin, it still existed in the head and books of Chancellor Fletcher!

The Reform Bill of 1832 created a marvellous revolution of feeling in the country. Reform gave a new impetus to every social as well as political struggle, and in the midst of this upheaving of thought and action tithes came to the surface with as much scum and as much virulence as ever: indeed more so, for in some places the wranglings of parties had become so embittered by repetition as to terminate in blows and serious fighting, with injury to the person. In the midland counties, and within the political area of Birmingham—then so noted for the part she played in coercing the Government to pass the Reform Bill—the fightings of the tithe parties are said to have ended in blood and loss of life. The Government could no longer stand by with folded arms whilst the subjects of the realm were engaged in deadly feud, but felt bound to try something to educe order from the tithe-levying chaos; something to lessen discord and lighten litigation; something to promote charity of feeling amongst men of the same race, living under the same rule, and professing the same Christian faith. Both sides of the House earnestly sought a settlement—Lords Althorpe and Russell on the Ministerial and Sir Robert Peel on the Opposition benches; and the session of 1836 showed that it could no longer be postponed. The *Ides* of March in 1836 had come before the Tithe question had become ventilated, and the *Ides* of March had

gone before Parliament obtained a due enlightenment, or could report satisfactory progress. The light so long looked for, and so much required to penetrate the heavy mists surrounding this vexed question, came from a very unexpected quarter in Parliament —it came from a member of the Commons then in his fifth year's experience of parliamentary life, and neither lawyer nor tithe-owner—a member without any out-of-doors reputation, and as devoid of the pretensions of the demagogue as he was of the pride of the patrician—a member without family prestige in the House, and not exalted by Ministerial patronage—and that member was the representative of East Cumberland, William Blamire.

Taking a broad view of tithes in their special as well as collateral relations, it seems but a fair deduction to add that if the social comforts and well-doing of England, and the rapidly increasing wants of her people, were to be viewed as worthy of the consideration of her statesmen and rulers, this light emanating from Blamire's sagacious mind was not developed too soon for England's peace, not too soon for England's prosperity.

On Friday, March 25th, 1836, he made his famous speech on the Tithe Commutation Bill, introduced by the Whig Government, and showed the inapplicability of the measure to many parts of England. The House listened with marked attention to his arguments and illustrations, and it was acknowledged that his speech was *the* speech on this national question. Sir R. Peel complimented Blamire on his "able and powerful speech, and the consummate knowledge he had displayed of the subject before

the House, and the perfect clearness with which he had explained his views." Such words from the leader of the Opposition, and a person so little liable to praise others, sufficed to place Blamire amongst the foremost men of the House. It was remarkable that of the members constituting the Commons House of Parliament there was only one man, and he neither possessed of ecclesiastical preferment nor favoured by episcopal love, not a great heritor, but a yeoman or farmer from the north country, who could grapple with this great matter of tithes. Cincinnatus-like he came from the plough at the bidding of as independent a body of Englishmen as ever voted for a "knight of the shire," and, taking his seat among the collective wisdom of the State, pointed out in clear and simple language the varied relations of tithes; and by a series of examples drawn from his Cumberland experiences, especially Sebergham, and a general survey of the whole kingdom, was enabled to suggest legislative measures for an amicable settlement.

It is not easy to lay down the exact circumstances which led Blamire to be so much more conversant with tithes than any other man in his times, but the frequent calls made upon him to arbitrate on this as well as other matters led him to attend parish meetings in different parts of Cumberland where tithes were being discussed. He used to say that he tried various plans of arbitration, but found the seven-years' average the most satisfactory basis of arbitrament. Probably his proximity to Sebergham (not two miles from Thackwood), where a kind of commutation of tithes had been established in 1771, in-

fluenced him as much as any other single consideration. The writer is aware that Blamire attributed much to Paley's personal attentions, and in a future page this influence will be referred to. However it may have been, the example afforded by Blamire's speech and practical knowledge of tithes shows how much the most intricate question can be shorn of its difficulties by a clear-headed man thoroughly conversant with the subject under discussion, and thoroughly anxious for its successful solution. The Government—wisely for themselves and beneficially for the country—sought Mr. Blamire's aid in carrying a Bill embodying his views and suggestions; and when the Bill became law, the Cabinet unanimously offered him the first place as Commissioner, and seemed glad of his acceptance of the office, on the 22nd August, 1836.

It was the wish of Lord John Russell that Blamire should retain his seat in the Commons, but he assigned good reasons for not being trammelled with parliamentary duties along with so important a commission, and therefore vacated his seat for East Cumberland.

Captain Wentworth Buller, R.N., who took an active part (on the Whig side) in Devonshire politics, was nominated by Lord John Russell to the second Commissionership. The captain was a good agriculturist, and had given some attention to the Tithe question. Though it is highly probable that he owed his situation more to his political leanings than his knowledge of tithes, he was industrious in the office when the work was urgent, and at all times showed his anxiety for a fair representation of the two great

interests seeking a settlement of their disputes at the hands of the Tithe Commissioners. As Blamire had the character of being a Radical, and, of course, neither orthodox nor trustworthy, the Church took alarm, and its higher dignitaries experienced the awful feeling (for which laymen have such intense commiseration) that finds expression in the cry "The Church in danger"—a cry that acts as a maternal pap to the Thirty-nine Articles, if it be not itself the fortieth, so much desired by a witty divine—a cry that grows in force with the growth of the neophyte in his progress towards the episcopal bench—a cry that is heard loud in the priest, louder in the prebend, and loudest of all in the prelate. To quiet the '36 cry of the ecclesiastics, the Government placed the third Commissionership in the hands of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who appointed the Rev. R. Jones to the office. Mr. Jones was Professor of Political Economy at King's College, Cambridge, a good scholar and very able man, who had written a work on Rents. He could do real service in time of need when "fixed down to the argument," but he was not a hard worker at the tithe office; nor was he, as first supposed, a stickler for the Church interests. He shone as an excellent exponent of intricate questions. The Professor's mind was too great to adapt itself to the littleness of his clerical brethren; and as he had neither the patience nor the courtesy of Blamire, he failed to please them, and soon incurred their displeasure and hate for his rough tone and decisive manner. The three Commissioners worked amicably together. Blamire esteemed the Professor very highly for his talents, and the Professor recipro-

cated the feeling, and would do nothing important without Blamire's sanction—a fact which, in due time, the blatant Church party found out.

As far as the heads of the Commission were concerned the work of the Tithe Office went on harmoniously. Captain Buller, like a sensible man, took a spring and autumnal holiday on his Devonshire farm; and the Professor took a summer's airing across the Channel; but Blamire remained at his post, and, with the exception of three weeks at Thackwood in 1839, never missed a day's work from the institution to the completion of the Tithe Commission!

CHAPTER V.

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Mr. Blamire as Chief Tithe Commissioner—his Assistants—his slavish Labours in the Office—soothes the Choler of the Parsons. The End of the Commission. Copyhold and Inclosure Commissions.

THE three Commissioners had to build the machine with which they were to break up the old tithe system throughout England and Wales; or rather Blamire had to build it. The naval captain and the collegiate professor, however able and excellent, were not up to the work. In *form* the Commissioners divided England and Wales into three districts, but in *fact* Blamire monopolised his own district and kept his eye upon the two others. In putting the machine intogear, first of all came the home staff of the office, and never was office better served. Many of the chief clerks and heads of departments have died in the service, and some have been promoted. Then when Blamire had made the hands of the great Commutation machine, he went on to make the eyes and ears. He, aided by his colleagues, got together a staff of business-like men—plain agricultural men like himself, not given to law crotchets or to litigious weighing of extreme rights. These first Assistant-Commissioners were the apostles of conciliation. They went all through the land, compromised

quarrels, settled agreements, smoothed difficulties, and did all that could be done by gentle means. The labours of these men will long be remembered in the country, and among the most eminent were Mr. Woolley and Mr. Owen. There were others whose lives were used up in the great work, and who preceded their chief to the grave.

Then when the conciliation course had been run, all the quarrels had to be settled. In all these cases of dispute the Act gave an appeal to the Courts. Barristers were appointed to sift, settle, and decide all this mass of the most intricate technical jargon that exists. This was the most temper-testing work of all, for Blamire could only press on the work, and could not do it himself. For ten years Mr. Rawlinson, Mr. Wingrove Cook, and Mr. Herbert did the most part of it, and did it well. Each of them decided during all this time the ownership of more property every day than any three judges on the bench. It was got through, however, as Blamire felt sure it would in the hands of such able lieutenants as Wingrove, Cook, and Rawlinson, of whom he always spoke in the highest terms. Blamire's master-spirit was observed in this as in every other direction of the work. He put the proper men in the proper places, and it is in no small measure his merit that the appeals which were expected to choke all the Courts, and bring our judicial system to a standstill, scarcely amounted to a score from all the thousands of decisions given.

Then came the great labour of the lay Assistant Commissioners. The surveyors and land agents were in those days working out average tithe payments all

over agricultural England, and calculating Easter offerings in all the towns.

If the tithes had been a vexed question out of doors, their commutation was no less a vexed question to the three Commissioners sitting within the walls of Somerset House. In the great majority of cases the interests of the landowner and the tithe-owner were directly opposed to each other, so that at the threshold of the inquiry the Commissioners had personal feelings to counteract and allay. To fix the sum to be paid in lieu of tithes in each parish was by no means an easy business, but to apportion the rent-charges equally on the different properties in each parish was still more tedious. The Assistant Commissioners had often a difficult task to perform, and especially so when called upon to settle questions of disputed boundary between parishes—a piece of work not originally contemplated by the Tithe Act, but which the Government exacted from the Commission. Blamire wanted the Ordnance Survey to map England for the tithes, so as to get first-class maps, and to make his labours more accurate and satisfactory, as well as having those labours facilitated in a remarkable degree. The Government objected to his proposal at the time, but eventually saw their mistake. Such maps would have been most valuable to the Tithe Commutation.

Blamire entered upon his labours in the Tithe Office like a man who had a long day's work before him and was determined to get through it. He was generally at the office at eight in the morning, and continued at his post till seven at night, and often carried home with him bundles of papers for perusal

after an eight o'clock dinner. As he had a light breakfast and no luncheon, he may be said to have fasted and worked thirteen hours at a stretch every day. Partly in consequence of his long fasts, and partly on account of his nervous system being exhausted by the constant brain-work of the day, he had no relish for his eight o'clock dinner. Nature's demand for rest and repose made him take to the sofa immediately after dinner, where he slept for hours; indeed the only sleep he got for months together was four or five hours out of the twenty-four on a sofa. Such a life as his would have finished most men in a season. Had he slept like other men, and done as other men do in public offices, the Tithe Commission would still have been in existence, and much of its work still to do. Nor were Sundays exempt from work. He regularly attended morning church, and dined early; and not seldom repaired to the office for the full afternoon.

The maps and letters for the Tithe Office were conveyed to Somerset House every morning in a cart of the size of those commonly in use in Cumberland. In addition to his other correspondence, Blamire had, on an average, *three hundred* letters each day on tithe business alone; and so anxious was he that impartial justice should be administered to every one, and that extreme accuracy should mark the labours of the Commission, that for many years he read every document that came into or that went out of the Tithe Office. Each morning brought its own day's work in maps, in documents, and in letters—documents pertaining to awards or apportionments, agreements or disagreements; and letters more frequently charged

with grave complaints than with graceful compliments. But as letters are not animate, the fault-findings of their contents affected the Commissioners less as a *trinity* than they would have done each individual. Blamire had the first perusal, and possibly felt the words of the grievance-mongers more than his colleagues were likely to do; but he had a greater hardship to contend with when the aggrieved parties came to the office personally to upbraid him for the shortcomings, or the undue interference of the entire Commission.

The old Tory vicar, whose respect for the tangible things of the Church made him reverence the tithes as the work of God, felt specially sore to think that a Whig-Radical should be invested with powers over their commutation. One parson argued most learnedly that tithes were due by divine right; Blamire courteously said that he believed it might be so, but that it had been repealed by Act of Parliament! *The cause* of original sin was less abused in the pulpit than the head of the Tithe Commission in his own office. Blamire, being still in the flesh, naturally fared worse than his prototype in Paradise or the *Inferno.* Rectors and rural deans, priests and prelates, representing every *genus* of the order episcopal, and every variety of the race apostolic, found their way to the Tithe Office. A few came *mildly* to ask and to obtain information, others came *firmly* to object and to remonstrate; and a large majority came *violently* to scold and to storm. Blamire had to receive these shoals of priests—some of whom were out of humour with the workings of the Tithe Act, and the majority specially out of humour with

himself, as the head of the "irreligious trio." Blamire had to play St. Paul's part daily, and he performed it as no other man could have done within or without the precincts of the Tithe Office. No words can depict the mode, much less the import, of Blamire's tact and management of the discordant and complaining parties who thronged Somerset House during the first years of his official life. It was laughable to observe *the entrance* into Blamire's private room of these captious priests, full of choler, indignation, and swollen pride, and to mark *the exit* of the same men, so decorous and so satisfied, and shaking hands with "that dreadful fellow Blamire," and wishing him "good morning" as graciously as if they had been assured of the reversionary interest of the richest stall in the richest cathedral of the kingdom! Even the "Evangelical minister" lost his bitterness of soul and general uncharitableness of spirit under the bland courtesy of Blamire. Page after page could be filled with examples corroborative of the opinion just stated—the violence and froth of the *in-coming*, the mild demeanour of the *out-going*, of scores of offended dignities or dignitaries of the Church.

It is not too much to say (what many most competent to form an opinion believe) that without Blamire the commutation of tithes might still have been in abeyance, or a matter *sub judice*. After the commutation had become the law of the land, the Tithe Office, failing him, would have been the arena of angry discussion between disputants who had long waged war in their respective parishes. Without Blamire's happy mode of calming the troubled waters,

there would have been endless complaints in the House of Commons as to the working of the Act, and endless litigation out of doors; and, finally, without Blamire, this great Commission—the greatest England ever issued and completed—would have been imperfectly managed, if not an entire failure.

Apart from the military achievements and the direct political enterprise that characterized the history of the nineteenth century from its first dawn to the expiry of its fourth decade, no boon so great, no benefit so large, and no public measure so truly useful, has been conferred on the people of this country as that which Blamire conferred by his Tithe Commutation Act. The principles upon which it was based—the mode in which it was directed, even to the arrangement of the minutest details—"the amendment Acts" from time to time—and everything pertaining to its completion, are to be attributed to him. The commutation of tithes effected a great social revolution in England, one of the greatest in modern times; and that revolution, so quietly accomplished, was the work of a Cumbrian. It was a gigantic undertaking, and the labours of the Commission were Herculean in character, but the man Blamire was a true Hercules. His colleagues bore but a poor share of the difficulties. Blamire was the architect, builder, and finisher of the work.

To enable the reader to form a proper estimate of what the Tithe Commutation Act has *done*, the writer should produce a picture of the state of things which prevailed before the Tithe Act was *known*. Landseer painted "Peace" and "War" as two companion pictures; but his "War"—though representing the

victims of a "bubble reputation even at the cannon's mouth"—was tame and unimpressive compared with the wars of tithes in England forty years ago. We read in history of the contending factions of York and Lancaster, but the war of tithes—the priest fighting with his parishioners—was more constant, more rancorous (there could be no chivalry in a tithe goose), and in a moral point of view more deadly, than the "Wars of the Roses." Blamire came with his commutation scheme in 1836, and in a few years established peace. No two pictures could be more antipodal than the tithe war and the tithe peace, and few subjects could be more illustrative of the deadly *animus* of the past and the pacific *status* of the present condition of rural England. Parishes formerly hotbeds of feud and hate are now marked by amity and repose, and the clergyman, at one time likened to everything that was bad, is now on good terms with his flock.

The tithes were a constant impediment in the way of agricultural improvement. The Commutation Act changed all this, and established a high standard of farming, and a more thorough cultivation of the soil, which a few years later became so greatly enhanced, if not more than redoubled, by the repeal of the Corn Laws. It is doubted by some if free trade in commerce could have been established in England if the tithe system had not been abolished. Commutation of tithes unquestionably gave the largest impetus to modern agriculture till England received the full benefit of the repeal of the Corn Laws.

The evils of the tithe system are much forgotten, because no longer felt, by the people of England.

No greater evil was attached to the system than the constant tithe suits and never-ending bickerings. There were series of reports published for tithe cases, lawyers noted as tithe lawyers, and a Court (the equity side of the Exchequer) occupied almost entirely by tithe causes. The annual law expenditure must have been something tremendous. It is believed that every parish in England has had at some time its tithe suit. Caldbeck, in Cumberland, was noted for spending nearly the value of the land in litigation; and in the case of "Fellowes *versus* Clay," in Devonshire, £15,000 had been wasted in law expenses. The Tithe Act has done away with Joyce's Exchequer Reports, Eagle's and Young's Tithe Law and Tithe Cases; and hundreds of volumes pertaining to this question are now no better than waste paper even to the bibliomaniac. When the Assistant Tithe Commissioners had to settle the old quarrels—old and pretty enough in all verity, of a thousand years' growth!—they had to turn over moth-eaten papers, dust-covered parchments, and documents legal if not legible, for the small atom of truth or principle of right to be discovered therein, if discoverable at all; and "to make a note of it," for the benefit of uproarious litigants at a tithe meeting.

It was the last turning over of these relics of the far past of tithes! These relics of the semi-Druid, semi-Christian, the Offas and Ethelwulds—these relics of the "noble Roman," the Saint Gregories and Augustines, and of the mongrel Churches of the Tudors, the Stuarts, and the Guelphs—comprising the Jewcraft, priestcraft, and statecraft of tithes, were by the labours of William Blamire rendered *nil* and

void, consigned to the shades, and buried for ever! There can be no litigation now—there can be no re-opening of this long-vexed question of tithes. All is settled and hermetically sealed.

The Tithe Commission expired on the 8th August, 1851. The accuracy of the work done by the Commission was strongly testified to by two gentlemen—Sir S. Northcote and his colleague—who had been appointed by the Government to examine into the operations of the Act. The result of the fifteen years' services of the Commission was the conversion of tithes into rent-charges amounting to more than four millions sterling *per annum.**

Of the real value of Church property no one could form anything like a correct estimate till the Tithe Commission was completed, as the tithe-owner was interested in maintaining silence on the subject, and, when asked for a return of his income, disposed to hold back the full extent of his appropriations. Of the many instances which might be cited to show that the value returned to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners was far below the actual value of the living, one may serve—that of Doddington, in Cambridgeshire, held by Algernon Peyton. This living, one of the best in England, and calculated by its extreme richness to

* When so much is said at present of the necessity of Church extension, and Church endowments, and Church poverty (alas! not a word on Church property!), and when bishops in large assemblies make strong appeals to the laymen of the diocese for help and succour, it may be well for the public mind to have its attention drawn to the episcopal palaces and the large annual expenditure upon them, the vicarages or priests' mansions in general, the glebe lands, the Queen Anne's bounty, the Church perquisites at baptisms, weddings, and burials, the golden stalls, the pew and Church cess, independent of the great and golden fact mentioned above, of FOUR MILLIONS a year from tithes!

sanction the Continental belief that "England is the very paradise for priests," was returned in 1841 at £7,306 *per annum*. Now the rent-charge was found to be £9,956. 4s. 4d., and the value of glebe £110. 18s.; in other words, its real value was £10,067. 2s. 4d. On deducting the *estimated* value of £7,306 from the *real* value, you have an excess of amount *above* that returned to the commissioners, of £2,761. 2s. 4d.! A modest surplus in all verity—not considered worth mentioning, yet sufficient, it might be supposed, to make half a dozen rectors easy as to victuals and comfortable as to drink. The Tithe Commission brought this big nest-egg to light, and exposed divers and sundry strange facts in the history of the Apostolic Church. No wonder the tithe-*receiver*, lay and clerical, felt sore at the searching investigation of the commissioners; and no wonder the tithe-*payer* grumbled and warred against the old system of things. Ten thousand a year bestowed upon the "cure of souls" in a single country parish would have been a glorious text for Buckle the historian. How valuable the souls of Doddington must have been to have cost so much hard cash—not equal, it is true, to the conversion of the Palestine Jew, whose price is priceless. Algernon Peyton was no worse than his neighbours, and not so bad as the Bishop of Durham, who after compounding for a salary of £8,000 a year, quietly pocketed £17,000. Think of the Saint Pauls and Timothy's and the thousand Nazarenes that might have been fed with this vast sum, and that the whole of it was devoted to the creature-comforts of a single person, and that person professing to be of apostolic growth, and a

rigid disciple of the man who went without purse and without scrip.

COPYHOLD AND INCLOSURE COMMISSIONS.

For some years attention had been drawn to the embarrassing relations of lands held on base tenure, and the enfranchisement of such lands was a great desideratum; but previous to the settlement of the tithe question no well-matured opinions suggestive of reform in the tenure of copyholds had come before the public. In 1838, or thereabouts, Blamire discussed the matter with several of his parliamentary friends, and H. Aglionby, M.P. for Cockermouth, who was conversant with the whole question, got leave to introduce a copyhold Bill to the House of Commons. Lords Lansdowne and Brougham laid a similar Bill on the table of the House of Lords. Blamire having furnished the main facts upon which that Bill was framed, took great interest in its progress, and invariably attended the "Upper House" to give explanations, or "to prime" the noble lords in charge of the Bill. After a delay of two, if not three, sessions, the Government passed "The Copyhold Enfranchisement Act," and entrusted its working to the Tithe Commissioners. On the 22nd June, 1841, Blamire was installed as Copyhold and Tithe Commissioner, with increased work and increased salary.

Under this Act enfranchisement could be effected by entire manors, or by individuals, or bodies of individuals, forming part of the copyhold tenantry. At first the enfranchisement was voluntary, but each annual report of the Commission set forth the necessity of its being made compulsory, and also the

advisability of making money-rent instead of corn-rent charges. With the compulsory powers obtained in 1852, the operations of the Act were greatly extended, and the Act of 1858 afforded still greater facilities. In the latter year, Blamire and his colleagues were entrusted with the working of "The Universities and College Estates Act." Any lengthened details regarding "heriots," "fines," "quit-rents," or of the mode in which the copyhold enfranchisements were carried out, would be too technical for these pages. The labours of the Commission cost Blamire much thought, as each year revealed new incidents in the tenures, and these required to be investigated before a commutation could be effected. As fines and heriots stood in the way of agricultural improvement, the enfranchisement of copyholds has been, and will continne to be, of import not only to the parties concerned, but to the general interests of the country.

Blamire's mind, though fully occupied it may be supposed with tithes and copyholds, was still bent on the development of other public measures calculated to extend the area and improve the condition of agricultural operations. Bearing in mind the wisdom and practical philosophy of Paley on all matters pertaining to the fecundity and material prosperity of the country, Blamire called attention to the import and large need of enclosing the waste common lands. As usual, his brain was well stored with facts necessary to a full comprehension of the question, and so essential as a basis to good legislation. And of course he laboured with all his might to give a wise direction to any legislative measures the Government

would bring forward.* His evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons threw great light on the subject of "Commonable Lands and Inclosure Acts," and helped greatly to establish the Inclosure Commission.

The inclosure of wastes had often been discussed in Parliament, and as far back as 1801, a Committee of the House of Commons sat upon the subject, but the result of the collective wisdom of that day was the framing of an impracticable measure.

In the session 1844-5, Lord Lincoln (then First Commissioner of Woods and Forests), with Blamire's

* One of Blamire's confidential clerks, Mr. George Taylor, kindly furnished the writer with the following account of twenty-four hours' experience with Blamire at the time the Inclosure Bill was passing through the House :—"Mr. Blamire was at the office at his usual hour of eight, and had toiled hard throughout the day with tithe business and in revising the clauses of the Inclosure Bill. He generally called upon me to assist him in his numerous correspondence after office hours, and about six o'clock that evening he said to me, 'My dear friend, I must trouble you to run home and tell your wife that you will be wanted at Lincoln's Inn this evening at eight o'clock, and that it is uncertain what time you may return.' I was then residing at Chelsea, and there was only just time to carry out the wishes of my Commissioner. At eight o'clock I arrived at Mr. Coulson's chambers, Lincoln's Inn, and immediately afterwards Mr. Coulson and Mr. Blamire entered, the latter carrying two small baskets of strawberries. The whole of the Bill was carefully read, sundry alterations made, and fresh clauses drawn and added. Almost dead with sleep, I heard the clock strike twelve, then one, two, and three; and at half-past three the work was done. I was then instructed by Mr. Blamire to be at the office of the printers (Messrs. Hansard, Holborn) between six and seven o'clock with the corrected proof of the Bill. I went home to Chelsea, and returned to Holborn, and guess my surprise when walking up the staircase of the printing-establishment to find Mr. Blamire coming down, who said, 'My dear sir, I thought you might oversleep yourself, so I have left my proof with the printer.'"

It is more than probable that Blamire had no dinner, excepting a few strawberries; and he could have had no sleep during that diurnal.

aid and hearty co-operation (and both were essential to the work), framed a Bill and introduced it to Parliament, and early in August, 1845, "The Commons Inclosure Act" received the royal assent. This Act was to be carried out by three Commissioners—the First Commissioner of Woods, a paid Commissioner, and an unpaid Commissioner. The Government, as stated by Lord Lincoln in the House, objected to the duties of the Commission being devolved upon the Tithe Commissioners; but, as was afterwards shown, they felt anxious to secure Blamire's services as an Inclosure Commissioner,—an exceedingly great compliment to him personally.

Lord Lincoln wrote on the 14th August, 1845, to Blamire, to ask if he would accept of the office of Inclosure Commissioner, and said: "If you would undertake the duties, there is nobody whose election would give such general satisfaction, or who would be so capable of rendering the measure beneficial and acceptable to the country." He further added "that Blamire's acceptance of office would, in his (Lord Lincoln's) opinion and in that of the Government, be highly advantageous to the public interests." Lord Worsley was equally complimentary in private letters to Blamire.

It was quite clear to all who knew of Blamire's practical acquaintance with the objects of the Commission, that he was the person of all others to direct it successfully. He took office as an *unpaid*, but worked as a *paid* Commissioner, and now held the titles of Tithe, Copyhold, and Inclosure Commissioner.

CHAPTER VI.

Blamire's Herculean Labours. The varied Commissions. The Drainage Act. Exchanges. Fisheries. Irish Famine. Epidemics. Highways and other Undertakings. Death of Mrs. and Miss Blamire.

"THE Act for the Inclosure of Wastes," Vict. 8 & 9, embraced in its provisions "Four Grand Divisions:"—

1. The inclosure and improvement of wastes.
2. The exchange of lands.
3. The division of intermixed lands.
4. The rectification of inclosures imperfectly made under local or general Inclosure Acts.

Hitherto the writer has been content with a very general survey of Blamire's laborious undertakings; and however tempting it may be in this part of the record of Blamire's life to enter more deeply into the consideration of those rural reforms with which his name is so intimately associated, the writer must be content to refer to a volume* in which the whole question of

* "The Acts for facilitating the Inclosure of Commons in England and Wales, with a Treatise on the Law of Rights of Commons, by George Wingrove Cooke, of the Middle Temple, Barrister-at-Law." London: Stevens & Norton. 8vo.

Mr. Cooke's services in the Tithe Office received a fitting reward from the Government, who appointed him Inclosure Commissioner in December, 1862. This excellent man held office but a short time, when

"Inclosures and Rights of Commons" has been ably treated by an able man—Mr. G. Wingrove Cooke, Barrister-at-Law. Having a thorough knowledge of Blamire's labours, Mr. Cooke's opinion is highly authoritative, and he records: "These commonable lands have hitherto been unnoticed by law writers. I am indebted for the foregoing account [Mr. C. is here referring to a chapter of his work] to the evidence before the Commons Inclosure Committee of Mr. Blamire, a gentleman who may well be considered as the author of the three great rural reforms of the age—Commutation of Tithes, Enfranchisement of Copyholds, and Inclosure of Commons, and upon whose judgment we may rely with a comfortable assurance in all things wherein profound sagacity and unceasing assiduity can secure correctness."

"The Inclosure and Improvement of Wastes" had become a necessity to meet the growing wants of an insular and thriving country like Great Britain. The large tracts of wild moorland, the "fell-side ranges" of mountainous districts, and patches of waste and low-lying swampy land in various parts of England, are likely under this Act of Inclosure to be made amenable to culture; and the culture will create labour and educe new improvements and increased fertilization. Formerly the expense of inclosure was so great, that the cost of the Act pretty nearly absorbed the value of the land inclosed. Mr. Cooke

he followed his attached friend and chief, Blamire, to the grave—a loss to the Commission and to the literature of his country. Mr. Cooke's hearty approval of the first edition of this biography was the most assuring and gratifying reward that the writer received for his efforts, as no man knew Blamire's character and work so well, and few men possessed finer discriminative taste.

says: "Even considerable tracts of land were often insufficient to bear the cost of the Act and the partition, and the instances are numerous in which that cost was barely paid by the sale of the whole land inclosed." Now it appears by the present Commission, the expense "of the inclosure proceedings up to the time of the passing of the sessional Act that authorizes the inclosure" is not quite £20. At the period of Blamire's retirement from office (September, 1860), the Commission had confirmed inclosures amounting to nearly 350,000 acres of land, and not far short of 200,000 acres were under consideration. Upwards of a *third of a million* of acres inclosed is a gratifying fact to the political economist. The day may come, and probably sooner than is anticipated, when these commons and waste lands (scampered over for generations by sporting "Merry England," but otherwise viewed as useless, unalterable, and hardly acceptable as a gift), by being inclosed, subjected to drainage, to new chemical and new mechanical agencies, may yield herbage for our flocks and add stores to our granaries.

"The Exchange of Lands" was one of Blamire's pet measures. He knew the difficulties in effecting "exchanges," the tedious and not always satisfactory investigation of title, and the great expenses incident thereto. Previous to the Inclosure Commission, exchanges were little heard of, or, if effected, they were made through the ordinary channel of sale and purchase by the respective parties; and this procedure, of course, involved fresh title-deeds and documents, the penalties of "the law's delay," and the higher penalties of lawyers' bills.

Now all that is necessary to the exchange of lands is to satisfy the Inclosure Commissioners—

1. That the exchange is beneficial to the two estates.
2. That the parcels proposed to be exchanged are of equal value.

A map of the lands to be exchanged, the filling up a simple form or schedule, and a public advertisement in the local newspapers, are all that is required to complete the exchange, provided no objections are taken within three months after such publicity is given. The lands change their titular nature altogether. All this is done at a merely nominal cost.

After the commutation of tithes, the inclosure of commons, and the enfranchisement of copyholds (drainage will be alluded to presently as a public measure), there seemed but one thing wanting to crown the capital of these rural reforms with which Blamire's name is so honourably associated; and that was a power to get rid of irregular-shaped, angular pieces of land, to throw smaller plots and inclosures into larger fields, and to eradicate useless hedgerow growth and other impoverishing drawbacks upon the soil's fertility. And this power is obtained through the Inclosure Commission. No one can travel throughout England without being painfully struck with the small fields everywhere prevailing, and the great amount of land devoted to hedges and fences —the harbour of animals and of destructive vermin of all kinds. Many of these old hedges not only occupy more than a "good ridge of land," but are so lofty as to hide the sun's rays from a greater equivalent of surface.

In no county of England was there greater need than in Cumberland for the exchanges of small plots of lands running into those of neighbouring proprietors; but few counties have availed themselves less of the power of doing so. The more this jurisdiction of the Inclosure Commission is known, the more is it likely to be acted upon. When a man can draw a straight line across an estate, or place a ring fence around it, or exchange any amount from one to tens of thousands of acres, provided he satisfy the simple condition of the law,—equality of value, acre for acre, worth for worth—it is superfluous to say that he is possessed of the means of establishing great agricultural improvements. It is satisfactory to note that this power of exchanging has been largely acted upon.

A gentleman commoner who twice declined the honour of holding the "Great Seal" of England, thinking the charms of the country greater than those of the Woolsack, wrote a long complimentary letter to Blamire on the matter of these exchanges, and thanked him for establishing the power to effect them. This gentleman, Mr. Pemberton Leigh (now Lord Kingsdown), showed from his large experience both as landowner and lawyer, that a great boon had been conferred upon the landed interest and the country at large by the successfully-developed labours of the Inclosure Commission. To effect, as Mr. Leigh did, for £6. 19*s*. 3*d*. that which would have cost him hundreds of pounds by the ordinary method, struck his legal mind with more than usual force and pleasure.

Local improvements of a marked character, and

greatly increased capabilities of the land, to say nothing of the better feeling reciprocated amongst neighbouring proprietors, have marked these "exchanges." More than 2,000 exchanges have been "confirmed," or "otherwise disposed of," during Blamire's period of office; and not many years ago a property of £40,000 was exchanged for one of equal value. His pleasure in working out this part of the Inclosure Committee was twofold. He had high encomiums passed on its usefulness, and his own feelings were exalted by witnessing its beneficial operations. In a hastily written letter dated May, 1852, Blamire says, "I have never effected any object through life of which I am so proud as having been the instrument of obtaining the power [of exchanging] by good management and through Sir R. Peel." Blamire rejoiced the more that he considered the act would infringe upon the privileges and the gains of the lawyers.

In an early part of this memoir, allusion was made to the agreeable footing upon which Paley lived with the Blamires. Taking the facts of that alliance into consideration, some have viewed the principles developed by Paley in his Moral and Political Philosophy, and their being carried into practice by Blamire, in the light of cause and effect. This idea seems occasionally to have possessed Blamire, when he alluded to Paley's nursing him, and the early impressions he received from the noted Archdeacon of Carlisle. On recalling the date of Paley's departure from Dalston, and his few visits to that district after obtaining the living of Bishop-Wearmouth, the writer is of opinion that Blamire viewed the personal in-

fluences of Paley too highly, and that his great knowledge of tithes and kindred subjects was really derived from a careful study of the Moral and Political Philosophy, after he had settled down at Thackwood. No doubt Blamire heard much from his mother of Paley's conversation in the frequent and free discussion of national interests with her husband, Dr. Blamire. As Broadfield Common had just been inclosed when Blamire commenced farming, and manorial rights formed part of his own inheritance, whilst tithes were a constant theme in the district, it is not surprising that his active mind was disposed to give large attention to these subjects, and not the less that these—the commutation of tithes, the inclosure of wastes, and the enfranchisement of copyholds—had been so ably and historically dealt with by the great Paley, who used to take him upon his knee and call him the fine boy of the Oaks.

Blamire, writing to the author of these pages on the 8th August, 1851—the day on which the old Tithe Commission expired—alludes to Paley and his own work in these terms: "In Paley's 'Elements of Political Knowledge' you will find, in the chapter on Agriculture and Commerce, as subservient to population and provision, a most singularly striking and concise statement of the advantages which would result from a commutation of the tithes of the kingdom, from an enfranchisement of all lands of base tenure, and from an inclosure of commons. How great and how wonderful must have been the grasp of his giant mind, and how striking his foreknowledge of these things which a subsequent increase of population and of wants have made absolutely necessary

to be done; and how strange the coincidence that he should have christened the child who was to be an instrument of carrying out the whole of these measures! Surely, some things turn out strangely."*

On the 28th August, 1846, further duties were conferred upon the Inclosure Commission by an "Act authorizing the advance of public money to promote the drainage and improvement of land in Great Britain." This Act was the development of a Bill introduced into the House of Commons by Sir Robert Peel, with the view of aiding and extending agricultural improvement, on the completion of his Free Trade measures and the abolition of the Corn Laws. It is well-known that Sir R. Peel had a thorough reliance upon the character and experience of Blamire, and the fitness of the Inclosure Commission to work the objects of the proposed loan of two millions —a bonus as novel as it was largely advantageous to the farming interests. On the retirement of Sir Robert and his Ministry, the measure became an Act, Vict. 9 and 10, c. 101, under his successor in office, Lord John Russell, during the same session.

The first advance of two millions was soon exhausted. The Highland lairds got the lion's share, and one of them, Macleod of Macleod, asked for an incredible sum, so that it became necessary to limit the maximum amount of loan to individuals to £5,000. By 13 and 14 Vict., cap. 91, a further grant of two millions was obtained for draining purposes; but part of this money—about a quarter of a million —was expended, not in draining the soil of North

* Allusion is made to chap. xi., sect. 6, of "Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy."

Britain, but in clearing out the dwellings—the huts and "bothies"—of her starving population, and carrying these Highlanders to British colonies: in other words, the money was devoted to emigration purposes, and this was not the least worthy application of it. When Blamire retired from his commission, in September, 1860, no less than three millions and a half sterling had been advanced under the Acts mentioned above. Of the importance of these Acts nothing need be urged. The loan of public money to advance the public interests may be classified with the best examples of modern legislation, and the steps taken by our Government in this direction constitute a conspicuous landmark in our national progress and prosperity. Drainage has made, and continues to make, labour for our labourers, and, by rendering unproductive soils productive, is adding house to house, and land to land.

The Public Money Loan Acts were immediately followed by Acts enabling landowners to lend their own money on settled estates for drainage purposes, or to borrow it from any other source, on the same principle of a rent-charge, redeeming both principal and interest in a moderate term of years. Loan companies were also incorporated by Act of Parliament, and their powers extended to advancing money for erecting farm buildings and other important agricultural uses. Thus, when taken in conjunction with the inclosure of commons and the other measures submitted to the management of Blamire and his coadjutors, the advantages resulting from the first Drainage Act are almost incalculable.

When men have been instrumental in doing so much, and doing so ably, for the public service, it is not easy to single out their greatest work; the Drainage Act, however, ranks high on the long list of state measures developed by Sir R. Peel; and the working of this Act along with his colleagues in the Commission was not the least of Blamire's successful undertakings. It is pleasant to note that the greatest of statesmen and the most useful of State-workers, though opposed in politics, could act harmoniously together for the public good at a time (1846) when men's minds were greatly agitated by the antagonistic forces influencing the manufacturing interests no less than the "country party"—at a time, too, when another page in the great book of commerce was being turned over—a page that not only revealed a grand epoch in England's history, but afforded example and study for all nations and for all times.

Without the Inclosure Commission, and the Drainage Act, how much land in England and Scotland would still have been uninclosed, undrained, and, to a certain extent, uncultivated! Both rich and poor have taken advantage of its provisions (Drainage Act), the Lord Lieutenant as well as the humblest yeoman in Cumberland. And the money advanced by Government to the numerous applicants has been so timely distributed as to have stimulated new paths of industry. The manufacture of drain-pipes, wherever suitable clay can be found, with the labour, competition, and enterprise created thereby, gave country work a decided lift; then came engineers, labourers, and drainers necessary to the work; and this vast accession to the field of operative

action throughout the country brought in its train money and material wealth. And if good comes of *the doing* of the work, how much more good is likely to arise from the work *done*—the basis upon which that labour has been spent, the land being always so honest when honestly dealt with.

Nor was Blamire confined to his own special duties as the great worker of three important Commissions. He was consulted on other questions than those pertaining to land and agriculture. Some of these questions will appear anomalous enough to those who knew Blamire's early pursuits in life, and saw in him only the superior farmer and country gentleman. But his active mind could take a wider grasp than most men, and what he observed in other walks than his own he remembered, and years after could turn to practical account. In the autumn and early winter of 1846, anticipating opposition from the Scottish Fishery Board to his scheme of long-line fishery, he busied himself by letters and newspaper articles to promote the northern fisheries, and to enlist the advocacy and support of those who wished well to the suffering Highlanders.

In November, 1846, he received directions from the Government to prepare, in conjunction with Dr. Lindley, a string of questions to be answered by each Board of Guardians *quà* the potato-blight. In a letter dated November 5, 1846, he says: "I had a long interview with Trevelyan to-day on the matter of long-line fishery, which, I rejoice to find, the Government adopt, and will commence the good work at once. A yachting friend of mine goes out as instructor-general of these poor people. I am

very glad indeed that my wrinkle has been adopted· It is odd enough that my attention was directed to this matter by the Laird of Colls telling me that they had no fishing off Mull but that of herrings. I had another subject to discuss with Trevelyan to-day —that of potato culture."

He was frequently consulted, along with the veterinarian professors, on cattle epidemics, and had to take part in checking them. To both Whig and Tory Governments Blamire was a kind of cyclopædia on matters pertaining to stock as well as general agriculture. He was somewhat of an alarmist, and this was an advantage to the general public, as his words strongly impressed the ruling powers, with whom delay is the ordinary practice.

So pressing was the Government to meet the wants of the famine-stricken Irish and Scotch, that Blamire was asked to work after his official hours—these hours already far too long. The great desideratum was food to meet the loss of the potato, and to get that food good and economically, and at the earliest possible notice. Blamire had sought information from various parts of England accessible to the Irish markets, nor did he overlook the American supplies of food. His correspondence was very comprehensive on the subject, and a portion of it occupies a place in the blue book Government published on the subject of the Irish famine.

In 1846, and after many months' consideration, and the careful digest of a mass of information such as has rarely been brought together on one subject, he framed a comprehensive Highway Bill. This Bill cost him an immense amount of labour. In this

work he had the encouragement of Sir Robert Peel, who took great interest in this, as in other questions affecting the landed interest. The discussion of the Bill was postponed, but its leading features and the data collected by Blamire have constituted the basis of all that has been attempted in that direction in Parliament of late years, including the Act at present in force. Blamire suggested many improvements to the Government, but could not get them carried out. He proposed a Bill to meet the possibility of the public roads falling into disuse by the general introduction of railways. He took great interest in agricultural statistics, and hoped that the Government would do the same. Every one knows the difficulties surrounding statistical inquiries in general, and no man, however apt or solicitous for the work, could set himself a harder task than agricultural statistics. To say that Blamire gave the matter consideration, is to say that he put himself in communication with all the best agricultural minds in England, and that he was at length prepared with a feasible plan for obtaining the necessary data. As it was not probable that complete sets of statistics could be got from parishes as parishes, his notion was that something satisfactory could be accomplished by noting particular farms and districts in each parish—the land in culture and the land in meadow, and so on, by a system of general averages. He did not expect correctness, but a close approximation, and many were of the same opinion as to the general expediency of the proposal; but the Board of Trade threw objections in the way, and the matter fell to the ground.

For seventeen years Blamire never left London, and the only opportunity he had, or would take, of enjoying green fields during that long period was when engaged officially in walking over the public parks for the purpose of aiding the Government in some contemplated improvements.

The New Zealand Company and the heads of the Colonial Office consulted him on the laying out of lands, and on other matters pertaining to our colonies.

At one time the Government of Sir Robert Peel contemplated a Domesday Book, and Blamire's aid was sought. Having a strong bent or inclination that way, he was sanguine enough to think that the proposal would be carried into effect; but other measures of a more popular significance upset the consideration of the scheme. On all measures pertaining to the agricultural interest Blamire was sure to be called upon for his opinion by the Ministers of the Crown; and his name continually figures in blue books, and on Parliamentary Committees.

Sir Robert Peel had the highest opinion of Blamire, and used to speak of him as "that most estimable man," or "that indefatigable public servant." In his opinion, the Drainage Act would have been a failure had not Blamire conducted its first operations. The Earl of Derby also spoke as highly of Blamire, and when holding the Premiership a few years ago, gave a lucrative public appointment to a gentleman solely on his recommendation, and at a time when he (the noble Earl) had numerous applicants for the vacant post among his own party; but he said "he could not refuse so excellent a public servant as Mr. Blamire." The Earl did himself high honour by the

bestowal of a gift of patronage to a political opponent; and Blamire's gratitude was not the less sincere that he valued it as a compliment to himself personally. It was believed that Blamire could get any appointment in his own line that he chose to ask for. He felt that he could succeed better with the Conservative party than with the Whigs, as the former could appreciate talent without, as well as within, their own circle, whilst the latter were apt to serve their place-hunting progeny.

With so many responsible duties—as arduous as they were unexampled—a constant anxiety of mind, and without a day's relaxation for a long series of years, it is not surprising that his health began to suffer. The Highway Bill, in addition to his Commissions, and the Scottish distress and Irish famine business, that he had to do after official hours, seem to have proved too much even for his herculean frame. In 1847 he had warning in a threatened paralysis which disabled his right arm, and, of course, stopped his pen. This was a great trial to him, as his pen was a part of himself, and to see it out of employ whilst the table was covered with papers requiring correction, or correspondence upon, was an embarrassment of no ordinary kind to Blamire. He could not go to the office, so the office work had to be carried to him in Harley Street. Here he was visited by a number of his old friends, by the Archbishop of York, by his parliamentary associates, and others—all of whom, interested as they were in his recovery, advised his withdrawal from work for a few months. The writer was asked to lend a helping hand to those of his many attached friends, but

nothing could induce Blamire to attempt a railway journey. He had become nervous with the suddenness of the seizure and his unfitness to write. After a few weeks, his fine constitutional powers prevailed, and there was a gradual return of muscular power and sensibility in his arm and fingers. Immediately after the first shock was got over, he kept two clerks busy writing to his dictation. Each month showed a gradual restoration to health. Fresh work and the onward spirit of his nature made him forget the cause of his illness, and the repeated advice of his best friends to take business matters more leisurely, and to avail himself of a holiday and the bracing air of Cumberland. He often promised, and as often broke the promise, to come to Thackwood. Even the urgent and affectionate appeals of his sister Jane Christian failed to move him from London. Years rolled on, even to the twentieth of his official life, and each year was marked by the same indefatigable exertions, and the same devotion to the public service.

In the autumn of 1856 his wife became seriously indisposed, and he did all that a kind husband could do to minister to her wants, and to mitigate her sufferings. Mrs. Blamire died on the 8th January, 1857, without issue. The interment of her remains at Raughton Head brought Blamire home, after seventeen or eighteen years' absence. Having broken through the fears of railway travelling, he paid his good sister two short visits during the summer and autumn of 1857; his third visit was the most trying event of his life. Miss Blamire was then approaching her 70th year, and, like her brother, had always

attempted and done more than any other person. In the summer of 1857, she showed unequivocal signs of bodily weakness, but kept moving about till the last week of her life; and that life, so true, so valuable, and so sweetly manifested, terminated on the morning of the 20th September. Blamire never was the same person after this second trial of sorrow and affliction, yet he returned to London, and laboured as he best could at office work. In one of his letters he says: "I remain in this office as long each day as I well can, and find temporary relief from my affliction when I can occupy myself about matters of business."

CHAPTER VII.

Blamire refuses a Public Dinner. Outfall Bill. Cadastral Survey. Retires from Official Work. Summary of his Life and Character. No Titles or Honours. His Death. Memorial Fund.

IN September, 1858, a large and influential meeting of Cumberland gentlemen was held in Carlisle for the purpose of inviting Mr. Blamire to a public dinner, "in acknowledgment of his long and faithful services to the county and the kingdom at large." Had Blamire accepted the proffered kindness, it would have been made a compliment worthy of the man and of the county which claimed him for her own; but his mind was so engaged at that time with his ordinary avocations, in endeavouring to get through Parliament an improved "Outfall Bill," so essential to make the Drainage Act complete, that he begged his Cumberland well-wishers to postpone the meeting.

Previous to 1860 Blamire had directed his attention to the development of a general measure for outfalls and arterial drainage, to which he naturally attached great importance, as being essential to the completion of the drainage of low-lying lands and marshy swamps in different parts of England. Mr. Wingrove Cooke, whilst in the Tithe Office, drew up a Bill under Blamire's instructions, and the draught of this Bill was submitted to the best-known agriculturists, and those most practically acquainted with

the necessities of such a measure; all of whom gave their hearty approval to the Bill proposed. In February, 1852, the Bill was introduced to the Lords by the Earl of Carlisle; but the retirement of Lord John Russell's Ministry prevented it from being considered. In *The Times*, December 14, 1860, Mr. Cooke has a letter pointing out to the Earl of Romney and other noblemen who had taken part at a London meeting on the subject of "outfalls," that a measure was already in the hands of Government emanating from Blamire's practical mind, and drawn up by himself. In that letter Mr. Cooke says, in reference to Blamire, "If the health of that sagacious and indefatigable public servant did not, unfortunately, preclude him from taking part in this question, I should not have thought myself justified in saying a word upon a subject so entirely his own."

Soon after the Tithe Commission was got into working order, Blamire finding such imperfections in the maps furnished him, called the attention of the Government to the need of a cadastral survey of England and Wales. In 1842, an official communication was forwarded to Sir R. Peel by Blamire and his colleagues, strongly urging that the plans which were then being framed for the Inclosure Office should be made referable to a uniform system of triangulation. This advice was disregarded by Sir R. Peel and Sir James Graham in the Home Office—men of all others, it might have been supposed, likely to see the value of the proposed measure, and to carry it out effectively. Colonel Dawson, one of Blamire's colleagues, took special interest in the matter, and did all he could to see the plans worthy of the Inclosure

Commission; but the Government went on spending tens of thousands to no purpose. A scientific congress from the different states of Europe was held in Brussels to determine upon some general survey at the very time that England was discussing the 1-inch or 6-inch scale. Sir Charles Trevelyan was at the Treasury, and he invited English savans to express their views on the subject; but so widely different were their opinions that he (Sir Charles) could make nothing of them; so he called in Sir John Burgoyne, Mr. Blamire, and Mr. Rendell to read and report upon the communications which had been addressed to him. The Burgoyne and Blamire Committee published all the letters in a blue book, and they recommended the scale of .0004, or $\frac{1}{2500}$ of a mile, and this had been the unanimous opinion of the statists who attended the Congress. This was the first time that the 25-inch scale, upon which our future cadastral survey is to be constructed, obtained any official recommendation. In forwarding this important survey —the best in Europe, and of incalculable value to the landed interests of England, Mr. Blamire took a prominent part. Had his advice been followed sooner, the country would have saved immensely, and the Tithe Commutation Act would have been better done.

In 1859, Blamire spent a few weeks at Thackwood improving his property and homestead, but with less vigour than in days gone by, and with less heart that his sister was no longer there with her cheering smiles and wise counsels. In January, 1860, his health was visibly affected, and the writer visited him in Harley Street, and strongly urged him to retire from official work; but the month of May had come before he

fulfilled his promise, and reached Thackwood. As the summer of 1860 passed over, and ripening autumn brought no strength to his enfeebled frame, it became evident even to his sanguine mind that work was no longer practicable, and consequently he resigned his Commissions in September, after twenty-four years of hard official life.

Knowing the eminent and truly valuable services that Blamire had rendered the State, and how much his health had been impaired, and his Cumberland property deteriorated by his unremitting attention to public affairs, the Lords of the Treasury awarded him a handsome pension—the largest, indeed, permissible by law, without applying for special powers to Parliament.

The above is but an abstract or brief chronicle of one of the busiest of life's histories. Whether as yeoman, politician, commissioner, or counsellor of Governments, he was ever the same kind, obliging man—ready to aid the efforts of individuals, as well as to promote works of public utility,—most courteous and affable in manner,—large-hearted and cordial in his social relations—winning the esteem of his political opponents, and the thorough love of his friends, his class, and his party. The present generation of Cumbrians hardly knew him—the generation that is gone idolized him as no man ever was idolized in the county. He knew society in every phase, and could adapt himself to every station. He was a welcome guest at Holland House, and as well suited for its noble circle as he had been at an earlier period of his life for the smoky ingle of some thrifty farmer by the base of Carrock Fell.

Much might be gained by a careful study of Blamire's career, from the plough which he followed as a ploughman to the Parliament which he enlightened as a statesman. As his walk in life was varied and in a remarkable degree, so was it also illustrative in its changes from the slow, plodding, monotonous farming to the active, bustling, emulating life of the Senate; and this replaced by the wearisome attention to, and dry details of, the Tithe Office. His own countymen, particularly the agricultural class, should study Blamire as a Cumberland man in his rural home, pursuing his favourite pursuits with the zeal of an enthusiast, and that zeal not bounded by any pecuniary stint. His own countymen might also profit, and largely too, by studying the mode in which he gained the hearts of his neighbours and his class—by his urbanity, his usefulness, his undeviating line of action, his sacrifice of self, and his love of Cumberland. The aspirant to parliamentary life and public honours would gain something by tracing the steps which led to Blamire's popularity and his success in Parliament (after passing the meridian of life), and his still greater success as a servant of the Crown and an active promoter of the general interests of the nation.

His popularity was formed on a solid basis—a knowledge of the daily life and wishes of the people around him, and a hearty desire to gratify those wishes to the utmost of his power. There was no exclusiveness with him. He cultivated the acquaintance of all whom he recognized—at the market ordinary, the fairs, and the vestry meetings. After being "the great man of the day" in Carlisle, he would ride home in the company of two of his neigh-

bours and talk of farming matters, apparently oblivious of all the dignities of the day's proceedings and the personal laudation showered upon himself. It was this circumstance that led an intelligent yeoman to observe of Blamire that he differed from all men in showing "how humbly he could stoop, and how high he could rise."

Blamire was so thoughtful and kind and genial in every way, that one might suppose he had given every one of his acquaintances that consideration which belongs to the intimacy of a deep and sincere friendship. His conversation at table, his happy face radiant with good-nature, and more radiant with smiles and beneficence, cheered every one capable of appreciating a "fine old English gentleman." Frankness shone from every physiognomical expression, and gladness of heart came with the utterances of a voice toned to charm by its adaptation to the wants of the hour, and of the persons surrounding him. His anecdotes were of the best, and his storytelling only a shade less taking and gratifying than those of his uncle Curwen. The opinion expressed of Mr. Blamire at an agricultural dinner (April, 1829) by Sir James Graham, is worth quoting, as being so applicable to the man, and so characteristic of the speaker. Sir James, in proposing Mr. Blamire's health, which he did after "Curwen's memory," said, "His (Blamire's) attachment to the soil and to its pursuits, the excellence of his private character, his near connexion with your late representative (Curwen), his fearless independence, the habit of intimacy and friendship with which he lives amongst his neighbours, and his constant endeavours to promote the

welfare, the happiness, and the independence of the yeomanry of this county, are qualities we rarely meet with in one individual; but which I am sure you will all acknowledge to be embodied in the character of our vice-president, Mr. Blamire."

Blamire's mind was not of the order of genius, but it belonged to the most practical and useful class in English life: it approached most to the Teutonic in our peculiarly mixed British race; it was not imaginative, and had no alliance with the metaphysical or abstruse. His mind admitted of a wide application to work, and could have shone in numerous departments of knowledge. Owing to his large perceptive powers and marked individuality, he would have excelled in the natural sciences as much as he did in political economy. Luckily, his attention was given to state reforms, as he had the gift of seeing the adaptability of public measures to the necessity of the time. He could not only institute inquiries of the most heterogeneous nature, and gather all the necessary information, the facts, figures, and opinions relative thereto, but he could embody these into a distinct form or generalization which often became the groundwork of a legislative enactment. It was his great forte to collect data, to focus their value, and to photograph their application to the general interests of the community. It was this faculty, or rather combination of faculties, that made him so important a coadjutor of Governments, that rendered his opinions so valuable to parliamentary committees, and gave import and security to his public labours.

Men, it is often said, are creatures of circumstances, and Blamire is a good example of the opinion so

generally credited. Dr. Blamire complained—and his temper was not one to induce complaint without cause—that William's education was lost upon him, that he would not read useful works, and that he could not be got to write a letter; and what he did write was badly done. His case shows, as many others have done in history, how difficult it is to anticipate the future of a man's career, not only from the earlier phases of human life, but the more developed years of adolescence. William had reached early manhood when this accusation, implying either inertness or ignorance, was lodged against him by one of the most indulgent of fathers. All became changed in the next twenty or more years, and this change was not brought about by altered social circumstances, by marriage, or any other personal incentive; and instead of continuing a commonplace country squire, he had risen to note as "a Parliament man," as an unequalled Commissioner, and the greatest letter-writer of his day. And now it is no exaggeration to say that his handwriting is to be found in every parish of England and Wales—in private correspondence or in public documents. His writing was familiar to every post-office* in the country as well as in the Government departments. But how was it that the youth, apparently so mediocre in the

* As there is no portrait or photograph of Blamire, the handwriting is one of the only things left for the curious to judge of his character by. Blamire was urged by the painter of the "Reform Parliament" to sit for an historical portrait in that national picture, but he did not consent. He always pleaded want of time; and it was the same excuse when the sun and silver came into vogue as co-partners and true delineators, craving but a few seconds from their patrons.

eyes of his father, became a citizen so distinguished, and the most exalted of his brethren? Probably a number of circumstances weighed the balance in the right direction. The genial home influences most happily exercised by the best of mothers and most loveable of sisters—his own affable disposition—the knowledge he made of a growing attachment to his person by his own class—his mingling with superior minds—his position as an arbitrator giving him a tithe education—and, above all, his political constancy leading most unexpectedly to his becoming a county representative. Then, and not till then, did the thorough excellences of the man become manifested. He was the first of his family (as far as history unfolds) to rise to parliamentary honours, and he was determined to make that position honourable to himself and honourable to his country. The shrievalty had shown him to be the most popular man in Cumberland; and he seemed to remember this, and to labour more and more to make himself worthy of the confidence of his fellow-men. When placed in Parliament, he worked still harder, and taking Paley as his text-book of political economy, and availing himself of a large intercourse with his fellow-members of the House of Commons, he at length came forth in a highly demonstrative fashion as a great counsellor and true economist, armed with facts and laden with knowledge, and at the very time that an able man was wanted.

Had Blamire but given a fractional part of the time to his own affairs that he gave so entirely to the Government, he would have approximated a higher range of human perfection; but he put off

from day to day, personal considerations * and personal duties, as Prince Talleyrand did his diplomatic difficulties. It may be mentioned in extenuation of this fault (most visible in London) that his thorough and devoted attention to the public interests absorbed his daily and hourly thoughts in a manner that few can understand, and still fewer be disposed to believe.

Allowing the utmost to this deficiency, who can be instanced in these days with so many excellent traits of character as a public man, who laboured as he did, who practised the self-denial, and who loved his country better than his own interests? His love for the publie service, not as a mere official position, but as a means to an end, and that end the public weal —the strengthening the cause of right government and forwarding the interests of the people at large—can hardly be paralleled in the civil service of the country; and it is doubtful if anything so assiduous and unremitting, and withal so advantageous as his twenty-four years of brain-work, could be found in the military or diplomatic annals of England. Yet Bla-

* How his mind was engaged by business matters, to the exclusion of all enjoyment and personal consideration, will be best illustrated by the following example. Blamire had a favourite horse taken to London, with the intention, as he said, of having an airing every day. The master of the livery stables was desired to have the horse sent to the door of the Tithe Office each day at a certain hour, and he attended strictly to orders. The groom came daily for a time, then every second or third day, and at length, becoming tired of the business, disappeared. The groom sent a message upstairs, but Blamire was too busy with papers and parsons to come downstairs. The horse was kept several years at livery stables and then sold. Blamire still hoped to find time to ride, but in vain. The expense of that "real hobby" must have been something considerable.

mire had no honorary distinctions conferred upon him by the Government for a life's labour in the service of the Crown. Though his salary was ample, at the best it was but that of a Junior Lord of the Treasury when he held three important Commissions, and by no means commensurate with the extraordinary service he rendered the State. In any other division of the public service one-tenth of his devotion and a mere fractional part of his ability would have been duly credited by a ribbon, a knighthood, or a baronetcy.

As assurance was, and still is, the best passport to honour and office, and far outvies all other steps in the ladder of promotion or honourable acknowledgment in the civil service, there was no chance for Blamire's unobtrusive character. Had he worked less within doors, and frequented the clubs and public places where "whippers-in" and parliamentary notabilities "most do congregate;" had he, in short, made himself a political busy-body, and pursued the methods of intrigue adopted by men aiming at Court and Ministerial favours, he would have had the offer of ribbons and titles. But his open nature was quite incompatible with the obsequiousness of place-hunting or title-seeking; consequently he was passed by, whilst men inferior to him in every way were decorated with orders. It is by no means creditable to the country that Blamire's labours were not publicly recognized, while it is particularly discreditable to the Whigs, who have placed the settlement of Tithes next to their Reform Bill as one of their greatest claims to the government of the country. Some men get titles who are only known by the titles, and not

by services, such as ushers of black rods, grooms in waiting, and other hangers-on at Court. Blamire, on the other hand, was known for real service, and no titles could add to the value of his public labours. He would have conferred a greater distinction upon a title than any title could possibly have conferred upon him.

Blamire was not a person to say much concerning the favours awarded by the Crown to official men; but he often alluded to the forgetfulness of the public and their ingratitude to those who had served them faithfully. He himself was most grateful for the slightest kindness, and he readily perceived the want of thankfulness in others. When his memory was refreshed by local events, he was disposed to show some impatience with his countymen for forgetting their great benefactors. He used to instance men who owed their position entirely to Curwen, and who had within a few weeks of his death forgot their friend as if he had never lived. Blamire occasionally expressed an opinion, which was possibly based on more than his own experience, that of late years there had been but little encouragement to public men outside the walls of Parliament to exert themselves for the common good. How he would have viewed any honorary distinction it is impossible to say, but the fact of his not being awarded the highest order of civil merit marks a great error on the part of the Whig Government.

In conclusion, it may be said that leaving out of consideration the numerous minor labours, so willingly undertaken and so ably discharged by Blamire, any one of the great national measures with which

his name is associated as the leading mind and promoter would have obtained for most men large praise and gracious acknowledgment during life, and no small amount of historical reputation after death. But when the whole of his labours are presented, it seems marvellous how he accomplished so much, and that more had not been said of him in his lifetime as the hardest-worked man in Her Majesty's dominions, and so deservedly entitled to high honours and rewards. So great a question as that of Tithes, deeply affecting as it did the agricultural improvement of England and Wales—such important Commissions as the Inclosure and Copyhold, when viewed as the solid foundation upon which rests a large portion of the material wealth of the nation; and the fact of both the basis and the growing superstructure of this temple of peace and prosperity being mainly due to the development of one mind, tends to show that Blamire did as much as any man of his generation to advance and consolidate the social interests of England.

Being settled at home, Mr. Blamire's mind became more and more occupied with home thoughts and the improvement of his Thackwood property. His health showed no improvement in 1860, and the following year gave no more hopeful signs of restoration, but the reverse, in a gradual decadence of both mental and bodily powers. His walking was very much confined to the front of his family residence, and for hours together he would sit at the south door airing and sunning himself, whilst he admired the mountain landscape and listened to the songsters of the woods. The dawn of another year (1862) was

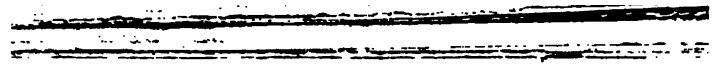
not recognized by Blamire except for a moment on the 8th of January, when there was a flicker of the old life before its final extinction—caused by the presence of the writer, to whom he bade farewell with "God bless you, my good friend." On the 12th January, 1862, ere the sun had risen, William Blamire was no more.

In accordance with Blamire's views, the funeral was conducted as privately as possible. The remains were interred on the south-east side of the burial-ground of Raughton-Head Chapel, on the 18th of January, 1862.

When Blamire died, Cumberland lost one of its greatest benefactors, and England one of her most useful and efficient public servants. By his death the Blamires of the Oaks became extinct; and it is much to be feared, and still more to be mourned, that there are few types left of that class of men of which he was the ennobling ornament and unrivalled head.

Considering the large and incalculable benefits resulting from Mr. Blamire's services, a number of his old friends viewed it right to hold a meeting at Carlisle in February, 1862, for the purpose of raising a public memorial to him. The worthy Mr. Howard of Corby Castle took an active part in promoting this step, and contributions came in from the Duke of Devonshire, the Earls Russell and Carlisle, also former colleagues of Blamire, and notably from the "Lands Improvement Society," and the more liberal-minded

gentlemen and yeomanry of Cumberland. The sum subscribed amounted to about £400, part of which was devoted to a monumental tablet, placed on the north-east wall of the transept of the Carlisle Cathedral; the larger sum of £320 was invested in British Consols, the interest of which is annually given as a Blamire Prize to promote the agricultural interests of Cumberland. The trustees to this fund are Mr. Howard of Corby Castle, Mr. H. Dobinson of Carlisle, and Dr. Lonsdale; and the committee of management of the prize are Mr. Howard of Corby Castle, Capt. James of Barrock Park, Mr. Thomas Gibbons, Mr. Thomas Donald, Mr. Nicholas Wright, Mr. John Richardson, and Dr. Lonsdale. "The Blamire Prize" for 1865 was awarded to Mr. George Coulthard, of Lanercost, and for 1866 to Mr. Thomas Gibbons, of Burnfoot. A very handsome silver medal, upon which is engraved the heraldic tokens and official character of Blamire, accompanies the prize; so that Cumbrians in days to come will be able to recognize the three great rural reforms of this age in connection with the history of a countyman—William Blamire of Thackwood.



INSCRIPTION ON THE CARLISLE CATHEDRAL TABLET.

In Memory of

WILLIAM BLAMIRE,

OF THE OAKS AND THACKWOOD,

IN THIS COUNTY.

BORN 13 APRIL, 1790. DIED 12 JANUARY, 1862.

Mr. Blamire was High Sheriff in 1828, and represented Cumberland in Parliament from May, 1831, till August, 1836. Having taken a prominent part in framing the Act for the Commutation of Tithes in England and Wales, he accepted the office of Chief Tithe Commissioner. He was also Copyhold and Inclosure Commissioner until the period of his retirement from public life in 1860. As a Servant of the Crown he enjoyed the confidence of all parties in the State; and during his twenty-four years of official life he was the willing adviser of the Government on many political questions, especially those relating to Agriculture. His practical sagacity and unwearied industry as a Tithe Commissioner made his public labours highly successful; whilst his abnegation of self, suavity of speech, and unfailing courtesy secured for him amongst all classes the greatest esteem and popularity.

This Tablet was erected and a Blamire Agricultural Prize founded by Public Subscription.

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THE LIFE OF

MUSGRAVE LEWTHWAITE WATSON,

SCULPTOR.

—o—

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

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fected, so perfectly does the writer, as he should, forget himself in his complete attention to the subject. * * * The work, indeed, appeared among the Christmas books, but its interest is lasting, and we have preferred to keep it by us until the beginning of the Art Season.

"We might have begun to-day with Mr. Wornum's Life of Holbein, or Mr. Fergusson's History of Architecture; but no, let us set in the front of our *causeries* on Art the story of one of our own men of genius, who in our time struggled up the rugged steep with little help, fell upon the road, and is remembered with due honour eighteen years after his death."—*The Examiner.*

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"A biography of such a man as Watson is well worth having; it was due to his genius no less than his misfortunes. Dr. Lonsdale has done us a favour by taking up the subject in a loving manner; it is doubtful if any writer could have done the work better for his friend, unless, indeed, he possessed a larger power of criticising, and a better-rooted knowledge of Art. Of both these advantages, however, he has sufficient to make a commendable book, with the rare merit, among artistic biographies, of being moderate in length."—*Athenæum.*

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